THE PIRATE OF PANAMA

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"PERHAPS I COULD DRESS THE HURT," SUGGESTED MISS WALLACE A LITTLE SHYLY.
Frontispiece. p. 109

THE PIRATE OF PANAMA

A Tale of the Fight for Burried Treasure

BY

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WYOMING, BUCKY O'CONNOR, MAVERICKS,
A TEXAS RANGER, BRAND BLOTTERS,
RIDGWAY OF MONTANA, Etc.

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The Pirate of Panama

TO

CAPTAIN FORRESTER
FIRST MATE ROBERT, QUARTERMASTER WILLIAM
AND BO'SUN KENNETH

THIS VOYAGE OF THE *ARGOS* IS DEDICATED

Ho, gallant tars and true, fall to!
Up anchor, lads, and sheets unfurl.
Let engines throb a low tattoo;
It's "All aboard for Panama."

The snell wind whistles shrill o'erhead,
The bullets spatter thick below,
By candle light we count our dead,
While we are bound for Panama.

For all true men waits hidden gold,
'Gainst all true hearts fight pirate foes,
Who bears him with a courage bold
Will land with us at Panama.

Into the deep drive strong and sure,
Straight as an arrow for the goal,
From off the course let nothing lure,
The breeze is fair for Panama.

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The Pirate of Panama

CHAPTER I

A SCRAP OF PAPER

It was a dismal, sodden morning, with heavy clouds banked in the western sky. Rain had sloshed down since midnight so that the gutter in front of me was a turbid little river.

A chill wind swept across the city and penetrated to the marrow. From the summit of the hill, three blocks above me, my car was sliding down, but I clung to the curb to postpone until the last moment a plunge into the flowing street.

Since I was five-and-twenty, in tip-top health, and Irish by descent, I whistled while the wind-swept drops splashed the shine from my shoes. Rain or sun, 'twas a good little old world, though, faith! I could have wished it a less humdrum one.

For every morning I waited at that same time and place for the same car to take me to my desk in the offices of Kester & Wilcox, and every day I did the same sort of routine grubbing in prepara-

tion of cases for more experienced lawyers to handle.

Sometimes it flashed across me that I was a misfit. Nature had cast me for the part of a soldier of fortune, and instead I was giving my services to help a big corporation escape the payment of damages for accidents caused by its cars. I had turned my back on the romance of life. Well, it was the penalty one must pay to win success.

And while I stood on the curb there fluttered down to me from the dun heavens an invitation to the great adventure my soul longed for. It came on a gust of wind and lay on the sidewalk at my feet, a torn sheet of paper yellowed with age.

I had no premonition of what that faded bit of parchment meant, no picture of men in deadly battle, of the flash of knives or the gleam of revolvers, of lusty seamen lying curled on the deck where they had fallen at the call of sudden death. The only feeling that stirred in me was a faint curiosity at the odd markings on the sheet.

My foot moved forward and pinned the paper to the cement walk. Should I pick it up? Of what use? It would turn out to be only some Chinese laundry bill. Already the gong of the street-car was not more than a block away as it swept down the hill.

Was it some faint sound that drew my eyes up? Or was I answering the call of my destiny when my lifted gaze met the figure of a young woman framed in a second-story window? She was leaning far out, with arm stretched down and fingers opened wide.

Behind her stood a man, also out of the window to his waist. One of his hands clutched her wrist, the other reached toward hers. That he had been trying to take from her the paper she had flung away was an easy guess.

I had but the fraction of a second before my car was slowing for the crossing, but it was long enough to read in his dark face a malignant rage, in her fair, flushed one a defiant triumph. Stooping, I gathered the document that lay under my foot, then ran forward and swung to the platform of the car.

If there had been time for second thought I might have stayed to see the drama out, or I might have left the cause of quarrel where it lay. As it was I had done neither one thing nor the other. Having yielded to impulse so far as to pick up the paper, I had then done the conventional thing and ignored the little scene above.

But when I glanced back up the hill I glimpsed

a man flying bareheaded from a doorway and pursuing the car with gestures of impotent fury.

All the way down to the business quarter the odd affair challenged my interest. What did it mean? The picture in the window was no laughing romp meant to end in kisses. So much I was willing to swear. There was passion in both the faces.

Out of those two lives I had snatched a vivid moment, perhaps one of many common to them, perhaps the first their intersecting life-lines had developed.

Was the man her husband? I was not willing to think so. More likely a brother, I persuaded myself. For it was already being borne in upon me that freakish chance had swept me into the orbit of the thing we spell Romance.

A petty domestic quarrel suggested itself as the obvious solution, but the buoyant youth in me refused any such tame explanation. For the girl was amazingly pretty.

After a glance at it I put the crumpled paper in my pocketbook. In that crowded car, hanging to a strap, I could make nothing of it. At the office my time belonged to Kester & Wilcox until noon, for I was still in that preliminary stage of my legal career during which I found it convenient to ex-

change my inexperience for fifteen dollars a week. A clouded real-estate title was presumably engaging my attention, but between my mind and the abstract kept jumping a map with the legend "Doubloon Spit" above it.

Faith, the blood sang in my veins. The scent of adventure was in my nostrils. A fool you may think me, but I was already on the hunt for buried treasure. Half a dozen times I had the paper out furtively, and as soon as my hour of release came I cleared the desk and spread the yellow, tattered document upon it.

The ink had been originally red, but in places it was faded almost to illegibility. The worn edges at the folds showed how often it had been opened and scanned. One lower corner had been torn away, leaving perhaps seven-eighths of the original manuscript. Yet in spite of its imperfect state of preservation I found this relic of a dead and forgotten past pulse-stirring.

Before me lay the map of a peninsula, the upper part sketched in vaguely but the toe marked apparently with the greatest care. The first detail that caught my eye was a sketch of a brig in the bay, beneath which was written:

"Here *Santa Theresa* went to Hell."

It was plain that the coast line was charted ac-

curately so as to show the precise location of the inlets. It was a contour map, giving the hills, sand reaches, and groves. At the nearest one of these last was jotted down the words: "Umbrela Tree."

A little cross had been drawn near the foot of a hill. From this a long line ran into the bay with a loop at the end in which had been printed neatly: "Where Lobardi croked. Good riddance."

Not far from this were three little circles, beneath which was one word in capitals, "ITTE."

My heart leaped like an unleashed foxhound taking the trail. What could it mean but treasure? What had happened to the *Santa Theresa?* Had some one helped Lobardi to "croke" by cracking his skull? Could that dim, red ink once have been the life blood in a man's veins?

Here was food enough to fire the blood of a cool-headed Yankee, let alone that of a mad Irishman. I caught a vision of a boatload of red-turbaned buccaneers swarming up the side of a brig; saw the swish of cutlases and the bellying smoke of pistols; beheld the strangely garbed seadogs gathered around an open chest of yellow gold bars shining in the sun.

For an eyebeat it was all clear to me as day. Then I laughed aloud at myself in returning sanity. I was in the twentieth century, not the eighteenth.

An imagination so vivid that it read all this from a scrap of paper picked from the gutter needed curbing. I repocketed the chart and went to lunch.

But I found I could not laugh myself out of my interest. The mystery of it drew me, despite myself. While I waited for my chop I had the map out again, studying it as a schoolboy does a paper-backed novel behind his geography.

Beneath the map were some closely written lines of directions for finding "itte," whatever that might be. As to that my guess never wavered.

Whoever had drawn the map had called the peninsula "Doubloon Spit." Why? Clearly because he and his fellow buccaneers had buried there the ill-gotten treasure they had gained from piracy. No doubt the *Santa Theresa* was a gold ship they had waylaid and sunk.

At my entrance I had taken a little side table, but the restaurant was filling rapidly. A man stopped beside my table and took off a frogged overcoat with astrakhan trimmings. He hung this and his hat on a rack and sat down in the chair opposite me.

Instinctively I had covered the map with a newspaper. With amazement I now discovered that my *vis-à-vis* was the villain of the Adventure of the Young Lady and the Chart, as the author of the "New Arabian Nights" would have phrased it.

The man was in a vile humor, so much could be seen at a glance. Without doing me the honor of a single glance he stared moodily in front of him, his heavy black brows knit to a grim frown.

He was a splendid specimen of physical manhood, big and well-muscled, with a broad, flat back and soldierly carriage. That he was a leader of men was an easy deduction, though the thin, straight mouth and the hard glitter in the black eyes made the claim that he would never lead toward altruism.

In quick, short puffs he smoked a cigarette, and as soon as he had finished it he lit a second. Men all around us were waiting their turn, but I observed that the first lift of his finger brought an attendant.

"Tenderloin with mushrooms—asparagus tips—strong black coffee—cognac," he ordered with the curtness of an army officer snapping commands at a trooper. His voice was rich and cultivated, but had a very distinctly foreign quality in spite of the fact that his English was faultless.

I took advantage of the distraction of the waiter's presence to slip the map from the table into my pocket. After this I breathed freer, for it is scarcely necessary to say that in the struggle for the map—and by this time I had quite made up my

mind that there would be fought out a campaign for its possession—I was wholly on the side of the young woman.

But as yet I knew none of the facts, and so was not in a position to engage with him to advantage. I called for the check and took my coat and hat from the rack.

Then I made my first mistake. I should have carried my raincoat to the door before putting it on. As I buttoned it recognition began to struggle faintly into his eyes. I waited for no further developments.

But as I went out of the door I could see him hurrying forward. Instantly I turned to the right, dodged into a tobacco shop, ran swiftly through it to the surprise of the proprietor, and found myself in an alley. I took this in double-quick time and presently had lost myself in the hurrying crowds on Kearney Street. Five minutes later I was in the elevator on the way to our office.

I set to work resolutely, but my drifting thoughts went back to the military man with the frogged coat, to the distractingly pretty girl who did not want him to have the map, and to that spit of land lapped by Pacific waves in a latitude and longitude that shall be nameless for reasons that will hereafter appear.

It must have been fifteen minutes after my return that our office boy, Jimmie, came in to tell me that a lady wanted to see me.

"She's a peach, too," he volunteered with the genial impudence that characterized him.

This brought me back to earth, a lawyer instead of a treasure seeker, and when my first client crossed the threshold she found me deep in a volume on contracts, eight other large and bulky reference books piled on the table.

The name on the card Jimmie had handed me was Miss Evelyn Wallace. I rose at once to meet her.

"You are Mr. John Sedgwick?" asked a soft, Southern voice that fell on my ears like music.

"I am."

My bow stopped abruptly. I stifled an exclamation. The young woman was the one I had seen framed in a second-story window some hours earlier.

"I think you know me by sight," she said, not smiling exactly, but little dimples lurking in her cheeks ready to pounce out at the first opportunity. "That is, unless you have forgotten?"

Forgotten! I might have told her it would be hard to forget that piquant, oval face of exquisite coloring, and those blue eyes in which the sunshine danced like gold. I might have, but I did not. In-

stead, I murmured that my memory served me well enough.

"I have come for the paper you were good enough to take care of for me, Mr. Sedgwick. It belongs to me—the paper you picked up this morning."

From my pocket I took the document and handed it to her.

"May I ask how you found out who I was, Miss Wallace?"

You might have thought that roses had brushed her cheeks and left their color there.

"I asked a policeman," she confessed, just a little embarrassed.

"To find you a man in a gray ulster, medium height, weight, and complexion," I laughed.

"I had seen you come from the Graymount once or twice, and by describing you to the landlady he discovered who you were and where you worked," she explained.

Her touch of shyness had infected me, too. It was as if unwittingly I had intruded on her private affairs, had seen that morning an incident not meant for the eyes of a stranger. We avoided the common interest between us, though both of us were thinking of it.

Later I was to learn that she had been as eager

to approach the subject as I. But she could not very well invite a stranger into her difficulty any more than I could push myself into her confidence.

"I hope you find the paper exactly as you left it, or rather as it left you," I stammered at last.

She had put the map in her hand-bag, but at my words she took it out, not to verify my suggestion but to prolong for a moment her stay in order to find courage to broach the difficulty. For she had come to the office in desperation, determined to confide in me if she liked my face and felt I was to be trusted.

"Yes. It was torn at the moment I threw it away. My cousin has the other part. It is a map."

"So I noticed. My impression was that the paper was yours. I examined it to see whether it held your name and address."

Her blue eyes met mine shyly.

"Did it—interest you at all?"

"Indeed, and it did. Nothing in a long time has interested me more."

I might have made an exception in favor of the owner of the document, but once more I decided to move with discretion.

"You understood it?" Her soft voice trailed upward so that her declaration was in essence a question.

"I am thinking it was only a wild guess I made."

"I'd like right well to hear it."

My eyes met hers.

"Buried treasure."

With eager little nods she assented.

"Right, sir; treasure buried by pirates early in the nineteenth century. We have reason to think it has never been lifted."

"Good reason?"

"The best. Except the copy I have, this map is the only one in existence. Only four men saw the gold hidden. Two of them were killed by the others within the hour. The third was murdered by his companion some weeks later. The fourth—but it is a long story. I must not weary you with it."

"Weary me," I cried, and I dare swear my eyes were shining. But there I pulled myself up. "You're right. I had forgotten. You don't know me. There is no reason why you should tell me the story."

"That is true," she asserted. "It is of no concern to you."

That she was a little rebuffed by my words was plain. I made haste to explain them.

"I am meaning that there is no reason why you should trust me."

"Except your face," she answered impulsively. "Sir, you are an honest gentleman. Chance, or fate, has thrown you in my way. I must go to somebody for advice. I have no friends in San Francisco that can help me—none nearer than Tennessee. You are a lawyer. Isn't it your business to advise?"

"If you put it that way. But it is only fair to say that I am a very inexperienced one. To be frank, I've never had a client of my own."

Faith, her smile was warm as summer sunshine.

"Then I'll be your first, unless you refuse the case. But it may turn out dangerous. I have no right to ask you to take a risk for me"—she blushed divinely—"especially since I am able to pay so small a fee."

"My fee shall be commensurate with my inexperience," I smiled. "And are you thinking for a moment that I would let my first case get away from me at all? As for the danger—well, I'm an Irishman."

"But it isn't really a law case at all."

"So much the better. I'll have a chance of winning it then."

"It will be only a chance."

"We'll turn the chance into a certainty."

"You seem very sure, sir."

"I must, for confidence is all the stock in trade I have," was my gay answer.

From her bag Miss Wallace took the map and handed it to me.

"First, then, you must have this put in a safety-deposit vault until we need it. I'm sure attempts will be made to get it."

"By whom?"

"By my cousin. He'll stick at nothing. If you had met him you would understand. He is a wonder. I'm afraid of him. His name is Boris Bothwell—Captain Bothwell, lately cashiered from the British army for conduct unbecoming a gentleman. In one of his rages he nearly killed a servant."

"But you are not English, are you?"

"He is my second cousin. He isn't English, either. His father was a Scotchman, his mother a Russian."

"That explains the name—Boris Bothwell."

Like an echo the words came back to me from over my shoulder.

Capt. Boris Bothwell to see you, Mr. Sedgwick."

In surprise I swung around. The office boy had come in quietly, and hard on his heels was a man in a frogged overcoat with astrakhan trimmings. Not half an hour earlier I had sat opposite him at luncheon.

CHAPTER II

CAPTAIN BOTHWELL INTERRUPTS

As he moved into the room with his easy, vigorous stride, one could not miss the impression of his extraordinary physical power.

I am an outdoor man myself, but I have never seen the day when I was a match for Boris Bothwell at feats of strength. Unusually deep in the chest and wide of shoulder, with long, well-packed arms that gave his big, sinewy hands a tremendous grip, he was not in the least muscle-bound.

In my junior year I was the champion intercollegiate sprinter of the Pacific coast, but I have done a fifty with Bothwell for no less a stake than my life, and not gained two feet on the man.

At sight of his cousin he bowed ironically, with the most genial of mocking smiles. To that smile I despair of doing justice. It was not from the lips merely, nor yet was it from the good will in him, but had its birth apparently of some whimsical thought that for the moment lent his face a rare charm. A second bow was for me.

"Mr. John Sedgwick, I presume?"

"At your service, sir."

He removed his coat leisurely and hung it on the back of a chair.

"Just so. I've had the devil of a time running you down, but here we are at last. And all's well that ends well."

"You have business with me?" I asked curtly.

"Even at the risk of interrupting a *tête-à-tête* with the most charming young lady under heaven." His head dipped again with derisive courtesy toward Miss Wallace. "But I need detain you scarce a moment. You found this morning a paper I had the misfortune to lose. You will allow me to offer a thousand thanks for the very good care you have doubtless taken of it and will permit me to relieve you of it."

He was the very letter of urbanity, but beneath the velvet of his voice I felt the steel. It lay, too, in the glitter of the cold eyes that gimleted mine sharply.

Be sure I gave him back his smile and his insolent *aplomb*.

"Surely you are mistaken, Captain Bothwell. I recollect finding nothing that belongs to you."

"We'll waive that point. You found a paper," he answered quietly, drawing up a chair and seating himself astride it with his face to the back.

"I picked up a paper that fell from the hand of Miss Wallace."

"Exactly. I speak, of course, in the interest of my cousin. If you have returned it to her my purpose is served."

Impatient at our fencing, or afraid, perhaps, that I might be deceived by his suavity, the girl cut in tartly:

"You think you could rob me more successfully next time, Boris?"

His kindly toleration was a lesson in diplomacy.

"Fie, fie, Evie! A family difference of opinion. I think we must not trouble Mr. Sedgwick with our little diversions *entre nous.*"

"Unfortunately, you are a day after the fair, Captain Bothwell. Miss Wallace has already done me the honor to consult me in an advisory capacity."

I let him have my declaration of war with the airiest manner in the world. My spirits were rising with the nearness of the battle, and I thought it would do our cause not the least harm in the world to let him see I was not a whit afraid to cross blades.

"Indeed! Then for the matter in hand I may consider you one of the family. I congratulate

you, Evie. Shall we say a brother—or a cousin—or——"

"It isn't necessary to be a cad, Boris," she flung back hotly.

"Pardon me. You are right—neither necessary nor desirable. I offer regrets." Then of a sudden the apology went out of his face like the flame from a blown candle. He swung curtly around upon me. "Mr. Sedgwick, I must trouble you for the map."

I will be the last to deny that there was something compelling about the man. He sat there stroking his imperial, while the black eyes of the man held mine with a grip of steel. Masterful he looked, and masterful I found him to the last day of that deadly duel we fought out to a finish.

In that long moment of suspended animation when only our eyes lived—crossed and felt the temper of each other as with the edge of grinding rapiers—we took each the measure of his foe pretty accurately. If I held my own it was but barely. The best I could claim was a drawn battle.

"Regretfully I am compelled to decline your request."

"It is not a request but a demand. Come, sir, the map!" he repeated more harshly.

That he would somehow back his demand I did

not for an instant doubt, though as to how I was still in the dark.

"Let me set you right, Captain Bothwell. This is a law office, in the city of San Francisco, United States of America. I am neither Tommy Atkins nor a Russian serf. Therefore, I again decline."

Coals of fire lay in his eyes.

"I—want—that—map!"

"So I gather, and as a child you often wanted the moon. But did you get it?" I inquired pleasantly.

"The map—the map!" He had not raised his voice a note, but I give you my word his eyes were devilish. He was a dangerous man in an ugly frame of mind.

"Certainly you are a man of one idea, captain. Show proof of ownership and I shall be glad to comply with your request."

"But certainly."

So quick was his motion that the revolver seemed to have leaped to his hand of its own accord.

"I give you my word, Mr. John Sedgwick of San Francisco, United States of America, that in the event you do not at once hand me that map I shall blow the top of your head off!"

In a measure I was prepared for this. I told myself that we were in the heart of a great city,

in daylight, with the twentieth century setting of a fifteen-story office building. Were I to put my head out of the window a thousand hurrying people on Market Street would hear my call.

Yet I knew that I might as well be alone with him on a desert island for all the help that could reach me. I knew, too, that he was not bluffing. What he said he would do, that he would do.

My face can on occasion be wooden.

"Interesting, if true," I retorted coolly.

"And absolutely true. Make no mistake about that, Mr. Sedgwick."

His hand rested on the back of the chair for a support. My eyes looked straight into the blue barrel of his weapon. It was a ticklish moment. I congratulate myself that my nerves were in good condition. My fingers played a tattoo upon a sheet of paper on my desk. Beneath that page of office stationery lay the map he wanted.

"One moment, captain. This is not Russia. Have you considered that the freedom of my country carries with it disadvantages? You would probably be hanged by the neck till you were dead."

His mood had changed, but I knew he was not a whit less dangerous because the veneer of suave mockery masked the savagery of the Slav.

"Not at all. The unwritten law, my friend. I

find you insulting my cousin and the hot blood in me boils. I avenge her. Regrettable, of course. Too hasty, perhaps. But—oh well, let bygones be bygones."

In one breath he had tried and acquitted himself.

"And do you think that I would agree to your accursed lies?" his cousin asked, white as newfallen snow.

"Let us hope so. Otherwise I should have to base my action upon a construction less creditable to you. The point is that I shall not hesitate to carry out my promise. We can arrange the details later, my dear. Come, Mr. Sedgwick! Choose!"

"You coward!" flashed his cousin in a blaze of scorn.

"Not at all, dear Evie. All point of view, I assure you. Mr. Sedgwick has told you that I take a sporting chance of being scragged. I haven't the slightest ill feeling, but—I want what I want. Have you decided, sir?"

He was scarcely two yards from me, but neither his keen gaze nor the point of the automatic revolver wandered for a fraction of a second from me. There was not a single chance to close with

him. I was considering ignominious surrender when Miss Wallace saved my face.

"Can he give you what he hasn't got?" she cried out, her natural courage and her contempt struggling with her fear for me.

"So he hasn't it, eh?" There was a silence before he went on: "But it is in this room somewhere. You have it or he has it. Now, I wonder which?" He spoke softly, as if to himself, without the least trace of nervousness or passion. "Yes, that's the riddle. Which of you?"

His eyes released me long enough to shoot a questioning glance at her, for from my face he could read nothing.

"If you have it, Evie, my cousin, you will perhaps desire to turn it over to me for safe keeping. It will be better, I think."

"For you or for me?"

He laughed noiselessly, with the manner peculiar to him of having some private source of amusement within.

"Would you shoot me if I didn't agree with you?" she continued.

"My dear cousin," he reproved. From his air one might have judged him a pained and loving father.

"Then what will you do?"

"Yes, I really think it will be better," he murmured with his strange smile.

"And I ask again, better for whom?"

"For Mr. Sedgwick, my dear," he cut back.

She was plainly taken aback.

"But—since he hasn't the paper——"

"We'll assume he has it. At least he knows where it is."

His manner dismissed her definitely from the business in hand. "I must apologize for my brusqueness, Mr. Sedgwick, but I'm sure you'll understand that with a busy man time is money. Believe me, it is with great regret I am forced to cut short so promising a career. You're a man after my own heart. I see quite unusual qualities in you that I would have found pleasure in cultivating. But I mustn't let my selfish regret interfere with what is for the good of the greatest number. At best it's an unsatisfactory world. You're well rid of it. Any last messages, by the way?"

He purred out his atrocious mockery as a great cat gifted with speech might have done while playing with the mouse it meant to destroy.

"I'd like to make it clear to you what a villain you are—but I despair of finding words to do justice to the subject. As for your threat, it is

absurd. You'd hang, to a certainty, on the testimony of Miss Wallace."

He shrugged his broad shoulders.

"Life is full of risks. We all have to take them, and for my part it lends a zest. Unfortunately, if you take this risk you will not be in a position later to realize that your judgment was at fault. That, however, is your business and not mine," he concluded cheerfully, lifting his weapon slightly and taking aim.

"For the last time—— Do you give me the map, or do I give you a pass to kingdom come?"

The girl moved forward so that she stood directly between me and the weapon. She was taking a paper from her hand-bag, but she did not lower her eyes to direct her hands in their search.

"I reckon I couldn't make you understand how I despise you—and hate you! I'd rather be kin to the poorest beggar who sweeps the streets down there than to you," she flamed, flinging before him a paper.

Warily he picked it up and glanced at it, still covering me carefully.

"This is the map, is it?"

"You may see for yourself," she blazed.

"It is really very good of you to ask me to keep it for you, Evie. I'll take good care of it—

not a doubt of that. It's far better in my hands than yours, for of course you might be robbed."

His impudent smile derided her contempt. For me—I wouldn't have faced that look of hers for twenty maps.

"We're not through with you yet," I told him.

In gay reproof he shook a finger at me.

"Ah! There speaks the lawyer. You'll bring an action, will you?"

It annoyed me to be playing so poor a part before Miss Wallace.

"You're an infernal scoundrel!"

"I could argue you out of that uncharitable opinion if I had time, Mr. Sedgwick. But I'm devilishly *de trop*—the superfluous third, you know. My dear cousin frowns at me. 'Pon my word, I don't blame her. But you'll excuse me for intruding, won't you? I plead the importance of my business. And I'm very glad of an excuse for meeting you formally, Mr. Sedgwick. The occasion has been enjoyable and will, I trust, prove profitable. I'll not say good-bye—hang me if I do. We'll make it *au revoir*. Eh?"

An imp of malicious deviltry danced in his eyes. It was not necessary to tell me that he was having a pleasant time.

"*Au revoir* be it," I nodded, swallowing my bad temper.

Once more he gave us his bland smile, a bow of audacious effrontery, then whipped open the door and was gone.

It may be guessed he left me in no exultant mood. From the first the fellow had taken and held the upper hand. I had come through with no distinction at all and had let him walk off with the booty. But if there be those who think my spirit small I ask them to remember that a revolver staring one in the eye is a potent persuader.

Miss Wallace was the first to speak.

"You know now why I think him a dreadful man," she said, taking a deep breath of relief.

"Just a moment," I excused myself, and ran into the outer office.

Our office Cerberus was sitting at the gate of entry reading the enthralling story of "Hal Hiccup, the Boy Demon." From my pocket I fished one of the few dollars it held.

"Jimmie, follow that man who has just gone out. Find out where he goes and whom he meets. If he stops anywhere keep a note of the place."

The eyes of Young America grew big and round

with astonishment, then lit with ecstatic delight. He was going to be a real detective.

"The boss?" He jerked a dirty thumb in the direction of the chief clerk.

"I'll make it right with him. Hurry!"

"You bet I'll keep a peeper on him," he bragged, reaching for his hat.

He was gone.

I returned to my client.

Excuse me. I wanted to put a spy on your cousin. If he takes the map to a safe-deposit vault we ought to know where. And that reminds me—— What was it you gave him? I thought the map was on my table here?"

"I gave him a copy of it, one my father took years ago."

"But had it a corner torn off just like this one?"

From her hand-bag she drew a scrap of paper. "I was tearing it off just before I took it out."

My admiration was genuine enough.

"You're a cool hand, Miss Wallace. My hat is off to you."

The color deepened slightly in her cheeks. "That was nothing. I just happened to think of it."

"You saved the day, anyhow. He stands only an equal chance with us."

"But he doesn't. My father purposely made

an error in the details in case the map happened to fall into the wrong hands. And the latitude and longitude aren't marked."

I could have shouted my delight.

"But he has heard the diary read," she added. "In that the right latitude was given. If he happens to remember——"

"A hundred to one he doesn't, and even at the worst he's no better off than we are."

"Except that he has money and can finance an expedition in search of the treasure."

I came to earth as promptly as Darius Green.

"By Jove! that's true."

For the humiliating fact was that I had not a hundred dollars with which to bless myself, having just lost my small inheritance in a wildcat mining venture.

"I suppose it would take a lot of money?" she said timidly.

"Where is the treasure hidden?"

"On the coast of Panama."

"Near the canal zone?"

"I don't know. The latitude and the longitude are exactly marked, but I haven't looked them up."

"We'll have to outfit a ship here, or make our

start from Panama. Yes, it's going to take money."

"Then we can't go any farther with it. I have no means," she said quietly.

The lawyer in me came reluctantly to the fore.

"I suppose I ought to advise you to compromise with Captain Bothwell."

Resolution flashed in the eyes that looked straight into mine.

"I'd rather lose it all! He wouldn't stick to any bargain he made because—well, he would use the treasure as a lever to—get something else he wants."

The flush in her cheeks told me what else it was he wanted, and my heart was lifted within me. Bothwell intended to marry her, and she did not intend that he should. My wishes ran pat with hers.

"That is final, is it?"

"Quite. If you don't want to go on with it you can drop out, Mr. Sedgwick. I thank you for your kindness——"

"And who's talking of dropping out? I suggested compromise because I thought I ought, but I'm the pleased man that you won't listen to my good advice. No, no! I'm in to stay, and here's my hand on it."

"You're just spoiling for the fight," she smiled, her little hand in mine.

"Indeed, and that's a guess which rings the bell. I'll not be satisfied till I try another fall with Mr. Bothwell."

"You're a right funny lawyer."

"I'll tell you a secret. My father was an Irish filibuster in Cuba. He died with his back to a wall when I was five."

"Then it's in the blood."

"He had a chance to slip away by leaving his men, but Barry Sedgwick wasn't the man to take that kind of an opportunity."

"The dear hero! How proud you must be of him," she said in the softest of voices.

I nodded.

"He's the best reference I can give you. Now, Miss Wallace, I'll have to tell this story—or part of it—before I can interest capital in the venture. You are willing that I should?"

"Do whatever you must. It's in your hands."

"First, we'll make sure of the map, then; and after that you can tell me the story of Doubloon Spit."

Together we went to the International Safe Deposit vaults, rented a box, and put in it the map. Afterward we took a car for Golden Gate Park.

There she told me the story, in substance if not in the same words, to be found in the next two chapters.

Those who find interest only in the conventional had better read no farther. For this true tale runs red with the primal emotions of the old buccaneers. It is a story of love and hate, of heroism and cowardice, of treasure-trove and piracy on the high seas, of gaping wounds and foul murder. If this is not to your taste, fall out. My story is not for you.

CHAPTER III

CONCERNING DOUBLOON SPIT

Robert Wallace, the father of Evelyn, was not one of the forty-niners, but he had come to California by way of the Isthmus not very many years later. Always of an adventurous turn, it was on his fourteenth birthday that he ran away from his home in Baltimore to become a stowaway on board a south-bound vessel.

It was a day of privations, and the boy endured more than his share of them without complaint. Somehow he got along, knocking about from one point to another, now at the gold diggings, now on the San Francisco wharfs, and again as a deck hand on the coasters that plied from port to port.

When he was eighteen, but well grown for his age, he fell in with an old salt named Nat Quinn. Quinn was an old man, close to seventy, a survival of a type of sailor which even then had all but passed away.

The sea and the wind had given Quinn a face

of wrinkled leather. It was his custom to wear rings in his ears, to carry a murderous dirk, and to wrap around his bald head a red bandanna after the fashion of the buccaneers of old.

He was a surly old ruffian, quick to take offense, and absolutely fearless. When the old fellow was in drink it was as much as one's life was worth to cross his whim.

Nat Quinn was second mate of the *Porto Rico* when young Wallace shipped before the mast at San Francisco for a cruise to Lima. The crew were probably rough specimens, but there can be no doubt that Quinn hazed them mercilessly.

Soon the whole forecastle was simmering with talk about revenge. Off Guayaquil one night three of the crew found him alone on the deck and rushed him overboard. The old man was no swimmer. No doubt this would have been the end of him if young Wallace, hearing his cry for help, had not dived from the rail and kept him afloat until a boat reached them.

From that night Nat Quinn took a great fancy to the young man and often hinted that he was going to make his fortune. He told of hidden treasure, but never definitely; spoke of a great fortune to be had for the lifting, and promised Wallace that he should go halves.

No doubt he trusted the boy, but the habit of secrecy had grown too strong easily to be broken. Several times he approached the subject, but usually sheered off before he had gone far. Of shrugs and winks he offered plenty, enough to keep the youngster tantalized almost beyond endurance. Nor was it possible to force his confidence, for he was of a surly, taciturn disposition, given to brooding suspicions.

But at last the story came out. Quinn had been in his early days a seaman on board the ship *Mary Ann* of Bristol, which in the year 1817 was wrecked off the coast of Peru and cast upon the rocks. Most of the crew were saved, including the captain, one Thomas Rogers, the first mate, "Bully" Evans, and the boatswain, Pablo Lobardi, a quarrelsome fellow with whom Quinn had had a difficulty.

The rescued seamen were treated with the greatest kindness by the simple-hearted natives. To Cerro Blanco, the nearest town, they were taken and given work. Most of them found employment in the rich mines of the neighborhood, pending the arrival of some ship to take them back to Europe.

Lobardi was the only one of the crew who could talk Spanish, so that in his capacity of interpreter he acquired much influence with the men.

It was he that hatched the vile plot to rob the mines, loot the rich churches and the banks of Cerro Blanco, and make their escape on the ship which put in twice a year to carry the gold to Lima.

It looked a desperate enough adventure, this plan to seize an armed transport and escape with a great treasure, but these ruffians were the very men to carry through such an attempt. In its apparent hopelessness lay one prime factor of success, for none could expect a score of unarmed men to try so forlorn a hope. The transport carried twice as many soldiers, and these could call upon the town for aid in case of need.

Everything went as well for the rascally buccaneers as they could desire. As the treasure wagons from the mines filed through a narrow gorge the sailors fell upon them. By means of three stolen rifles they drove away the guard. In their wild flight for safety the men who composed this body flung away their weapons in panic.

Bully Evans, captain in fact though not in name, now had eleven rifles and three pistols to distribute among his men. Leaving an escort with the gold, he pushed to Cerro Blanco with the main body of robbers. At the outskirts of the town he again divided his forces. One party hastened to the

banks and another looted the cathedral. Within an hour the town had been stripped clean of its gold and jewels and the scoundrels had again joined forces at the wharves. Only the need of absolute silence saved the town from a carnival of fire and murder.

It was by this time in the small hours of a dark, moonless night. The pirates loaded the treasure into boats and pulled quietly for the *Santa Theresa,* a transport which lay like a black hulk in the harbor.

The first boat was challenged by a sentinel on board, but Lobardi gave the countersign which they had forced from the leader of the treasure convoy.

"Muy bien," answered the sentry, and he at once moved away to call the captain of the marines.

As that officer came sleepily to the deck a half dozen figures swarmed over the side of the ship. He gave a cry, the last he ever uttered. A knife hurtling through the dark was buried to the hilt in his throat. Simultaneously one of the men on guard let out his death shriek and the other fled down the hatchway to the quarters of the men.

The first rush of the troopers to the deck was met by a volley that mowed them down. Before

they could recover, the pirates were upon them with cutlases. Taken by surprise, hemmed in by the narrow hatchway, the soldiers made a poor defense. Some were pursued and cut down, others escaped by swimming to the wharves. Those who surrendered were flung into a boat and ordered ashore.

Captain Rogers worked the brig out of the harbor and set her nose to the north. There was need of haste, for the ship's consort was expected in a day or two. That there would be a pursuit nobody doubted.

Now occurred a state of affairs to be accounted the most strange were it not the most natural in the world. While the plot had been fomenting, and during its execution, these scurvy fellows had been of one mind, amenable to discipline, and entirely loyal to each other.

The thing had been in the wind a month, yet not one of them had breathed a word in betrayal. But no sooner had they won success than dissensions broke out. They were jealous of their officers, suspicious of each other.

Men whispered together in corners, and others scowled at them in distrust. They grew unruly, were soon ripe for mutiny.

To make matters worse, the wines and liquors

aboard were made too free. It was not long before the cutthroats were in a debauch that threatened to last as long as the rum. Fights grew frequent. Within a week one man was buried and another lay in his bunk cut to ribbons.

At this juncture Rogers, Evans, and Lobardi put their heads together and quietly dumped overboard the liquor supply. Captain Rogers was the ablest seaman among the officers, and he it was that worked the brig. But Bully Evans was the real leader of the pirates. He was a big man, of tremendous vitality and strength, and he ruled like a czar, hazing his men into submission by sheer brutality.

One specimen of his methods must serve to illustrate a week of battle, every hour filled with disorder. The brig *Truxillo,* consort of the *Santa Theresa,* had appeared in the offing one morning and hung on in chase with all sail set. All day and night the two ships raced, the one to escape, the other to capture the pirates.

Next morning there came up a heavy fog. Orders were given to about ship. Nothing could have amazed the crew more, and mutiny was instantly in the air. The malcontents whispered together and sent forward a committee of three to voice their refusal to comply with the order.

Before a dozen words had been spoken Evans stepped forward and flung the spokesman from the quarterdeck. While the other two hesitated he was upon them, had cracked their heads together, and hammered them down the steps to the waist.

From his belt he whipped two pistols and leveled them at the grumblers.

"Avast, you lubbers!" he bellowed. "By the powers, I'll learn you to play horse with Bully Evans! Pipe up your complaint or foot it, you flabby seacooks what call yourselves gentlemen of fortune! Stow my quid, but I'll send some of you to feed the fishes if you try to make the f'c'sle rule the quarterdeck. Come, pipe up!"

They did not say much of what was in their minds, for he took the words out of their mouths, berating them for meddlesome fools and explaining how their sole chance of escaping was to slip past the *Truxillo* in the fog and shake off the pursuit. All this he roared with the foulest of accompanying oaths, treating the crew like dogs so effectively that they turned tail and gave up without a blow.

On the morning of the third day after this the *Santa Theresa* poked her nose into San Miguel Gulf on the southern coast of Panama. The captain took her across the gulf into Darien Harbor.

then followed the southern branch practically to the head of the bay, at which point he anchored.

Tired of being confined aboard the ship, the crew were eager to get ashore. This suited the plans of Evans. As soon as the long boat had gone with the shore party he packed the treasure in boxes and lowered them into a boat. Late in the afternoon the tired sailors returned to the ship.

Evans ordered the boatswain to pipe all hands on deck. To the assembled crew he made a speech, pointing out the need of getting the treasure to some safer place than aboard a ship which might any day fall into the hands of the enemy. He intended, he said, to take three men with him and bury the chests on the sand spit within sight of them all.

But at this proposal the men broke into flat rebellion. Not one of them was willing to trust the gold out of his reach. Things in fact had come to such a pass that, though there was plenty for all, each was plotting how he might increase his share by robbing his neighbor.

Evans had made his preparations. The officers, Lobardi, Quinn, and two other sailors who sided with the chief villains were grouped together, all of them heavily armed. In the struggle that fol-

lowed the victory lay with the organized party. The mutineers were defeated and disarmed.

Evans selected Quinn, Lobardi, and a sailor named Wall to go with him ashore to bury the gold. Those on board watched the boat pull away with the gold that had cost so many lives. To the fury and amazement of all of them the boat rounded a point of land and disappeared from sight.

Evans had broken his agreement to bury the treasure in the sight of all. Even Captain Rogers joined in the imprecations of the men. He ordered the long boat lowered for a pursuit, but hardly had this started when a shot plumped into the water in front of it.

Unobserved in the excitement, the *Truxillo* had slipped into the bay. Its second shot fell short, its third wide, but the fourth caught the boat amidship and crumpled it as the tap of a spoon does an empty eggshell. Of the eight men aboard two were killed outright and the rest thrown into the sea. One of them—a man named Bucks, as we were to learn in a most surprising way—clung to the wreckage and succeeded in reaching shore. The rest were drowned or fell a prey to sharks.

The long boat disposed of, the *Truxillo* turned her guns upon the *Santa Theresa.* Those left on board made a desperate defense, but the captain,

seeing that escape was impossible, chose to blow up the ship rather than be hanged as a pirate from the yard arm.

Meanwhile, the boat with the treasure, which had rounded the point before the *Truxillo* had appeared, had been beached on the spit and the chests dragged ashore. Evans was burying the boxes when the first shot of the *Truxillo* fell upon his ears. Naturally he concluded that it was from the *Santa Theresa* as a warning of what he might expect.

Bully Evans showed his yellow teeth in a grin.

"Compliments of the old man," he said, no whit disturbed at his double treachery.

But at the sound of the final explosion the desperadoes looked at each other.

They ran to the nearest hill and saw the destruction of their companions.

The Portuguese boatswain was the first to recover.

"There ees now fewer to share," he said with a shrug of his shoulders.

Evans looked at Quinn and gave a signal. The double murder was done with knives. Where there had been four, now only two remained.

Evans and Quinn finished burying the treasure and removed all trace of their work. A map was

drawn by Quinn, showing the exact location of the cache. The murderers slipped back to their boat and, under cover of darkness, crept up the harbor till they came to the mouth of a large river. Up this they pulled and disappeared into the interior. Neither of them was aware that Bucks had seen the treacherous killing and the disposal of the treasure.

Six weeks later a living skeleton crawled out of the fever-laden swamps of Panama and staggered down to a little village on the Gulf of Uraba. The man was Nat Quinn. He had followed the Rio Tuyra, zigzagged across the Isthmus, and reached the northern coast.

Somewhere in the dark tangle of forest behind him, where daylight never penetrates the thick tropical growth, lay the body of Bully Evans. It was lying face down in the underbrush, a little round hole in the back of the head. Quinn's treachery had anticipated that of the mate.

As the survivor lurched down to the settlement his voice rose in a high cackle of delirious song. These were the words of his chant:

> It's bully boys, ho! and a deck splashed red—
> The devil is paid, quo' he, quo' he,
> A knife in the back and a mate swift sped!
> Heave yo ho! and away with me.

CHAPTER IV

THE MAN WITH THE SECRET

This was the terrible story old Cap Nat, as he was commonly called, told to Robert Wallace one night in a grog shop at San Francisco nearly forty years after the events had taken place. Only one point he omitted—the fact that Bucks had escaped from the long boat and witnessed the caching of the plunder—and this only because he was not aware of it.

During all those forty years Quinn had kept it as a fixed purpose to return to the scene of his crime and possess himself of the wealth he had lost his soul to gain.

But to outfit an expedition of the necessary proportions took much money. On this rock the man's purpose had always split. Periodically he was a hard drinker. He would live hard and close for a year, saving every cent he could, and then spend the whole amount in one grand debauch.

Had he been willing to confide his story to some capitalist of California it is likely he might have

raised the needed funds, but the nature of the man was both suspicious and secretive and he had guarded his knowledge all these years with jealousy.

Wallace was acquainted with the owner and master of a tramp schooner which had a doubtful reputation along the water front. Jim Slack had been an opium smuggler and was watched so closely by the revenue officers that he jumped at the chance of a trip to parts where no government officials could reach him.

Cautiously Wallace broached the subject to him, hinting at treasure but leaving the details dark. He drew a map which was a facsimile of the one made by Quinn, except that the latitude and longitude were omitted, and one or two details altered.

The result was that two weeks later the three men, together with a crew of five, were beating their way along the coast of Lower California in the notorious *Jennie Slack*. A bargain had been struck by which the owner of the vessel was to get one-third of the gold, out of which share he was to pay all the expenses of the cruise.

Each of the three leaders of the expedition was pledged to secrecy, but before they had been a week out of the Golden Gate Wallace discovered by accident not only that the crew knew the story, but that they were implicated with the master of the

boat in a plot to obtain the whole treasure for themselves.

He told what he had learned to Quinn under cover of an evening smoke on deck. The old pirate took it without winking an eyelash, for he could see Slack and one of his men watching them.

"Six to two. Long odds, boy," he said, knocking the ashes from his pipe.

To keep up appearances Bob Wallace laughed.

"I'm to be got rid of just before we land. It is to be made to look like an accident. You're safe until you have uncovered the treasure. Then it's good-by Cap Nat, too."

Quinn's laugh rang loudly, for the old man could play the game with any of them.

"We can't go back. If we suggested that the row would begin at once. No, we must choose our time instead of letting them choose theirs. And we can't wait too long, because they would see we were taking precautions against being surprised. We'll strike to-night—and hard."

No doubt Cap Nat was right in his strategy, but the scruples of the boy's conscience lost them the advantage of a sudden attack. He would fight to save his life, but he would not take advantage of his enemies.

Perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say that

he could not. Something stuck in his throat at the thought of falling upon men unexpectedly and dealing murder broadcast. Nor could the arguments of the old man shake him.

Dreadfully frightened though he was, the boy stuck doggedly to his position. He would die before he would do such a thing. And indeed he counted himself as no better than dead.

The two shared the same cabin, so that they were able to see each other alone several times during the day. Neither of them went out without being armed with a brace of pistols and a dirk, though these they kept hidden under their rough coats.

During Slack's watch that evening Quinn and his friend made their final preparation for defense. The captain's cabin was larger than theirs, and offered better points of defense. Furthermore, here were kept the arms and the ammunition of the ship. Quinn volunteered to get food and water into it while Wallace held the cabin.

Three trips were made by the old salt to the cook's gallery. The first time he brought back a keg of water, the second time a large tin into which he had crammed a varied assortment of food. It was while he was away on the third journey that a scream rang out in the stillness.

The boy heard a rush of feet, followed by a shot. Bob ran out of the cabin toward the galley. Up the steps from the lower deck came Quinn, blood streaming from his head. In one hand he carried a knife, in the other a copper kettle full of beans still steaming.

"Back, lad, back! Hell's broke loose," the old man cried.

"What happened? Are you badly hurt?"

"I killed cookie. Caught me in the galley and I knifed him," panted the old man.

A bullet whistled past. Wallace turned, caught sight of Slack's head above the hatchway, and fired. The head disappeared. A few moments and they were safe in the cabin.

"You are wounded," Bob cried.

Quinn shrugged.

"A bullet grazed my head. Get ready for them. Never mind me."

He tied a bandanna over the wound while the young man arranged on the bunk cutlases, their spare pistol, and the musket.

Slack was the first of the enemy to appear. He carried with him a white napkin for a flag. Ostensibly he had come to find out the cause of this outbreak, really to learn how well prepared the defenders were.

Cap Nat sent him to the right about briskly. "Get out, traitor! Step lively now, or I'll pepper you!"

From his breast Slack whipped a pistol and fired at the bald head of the old buccaneer. A shot from Wallace rang out in answer. Slack ran for cover, but at the stairs waved a derisive gesture.

For half an hour everything was quiet. Then came the sound of stealthy whispers and softly padding feet.

Quinn swung his cutlas to test it.

"Stand by for a rush. They're coming," he said.

Almost before he had finished speaking feet pattered swiftly along the deck. The night was suddenly broken with shouts and curses. The stars that had been shining through the window were blotted out with smoke.

The door crashed in and men poured pell mell through the opening. The details of what followed were always blurred into a medley of carnage in the mind of Wallace. He knew that both he and Quinn fired, and that the cabin filled with smoke.

Fierce arms gripped him. He hacked into the smoke with his knife. Twice bodies thudded to the floor. A cutlas slashed his left arm. He was

dragged from the cabin to the open deck and found himself struggling with a red-bearded giant who tossed him about as if he had been a child.

The fellow had a knife in his belt which he was trying to draw. Robert fought to the last ounce of strength in him to prevent this. But the sailor was too strong for him. Inch by inch he went down. The other's knee drove into his chest, his sinewy hand closed on the lad's throat. Wallace saw the knife flash and for the moment lost his senses.

When his eyes opened again the vise at his throat had withdrawn, the knee on his chest was relaxing. The giant was dropping like a log. Above him stood Quinn, a ghastly sight, in his hand a streaming cutlas.

Wallace rose and looked about him. Two men lay huddled in the cabin, a third was staggering away with both hands clapped to his head. The giant made four, the cook five. This left only Captain Slack against them.

"By Heaven, we've beat them," the boy cried.

"Yes, lad, we've beat them," grinned Quinn, leaning heavily against the door. "But it's Nat's last fight. I've got a bellyful—more than I can carry. The old man is bound for Davy Jones's locker."

Slowly he slid to the deck.

Robert carried him into the cabin, bleeding from a dozen wounds. He was badly hacked, and from a gunshot wound in the vitals he was bleeding to death.

His comrade forced liquor between his teeth and offered to examine his wounds. Old Nat waved him aside.

"No use. I'm for hell." He smiled and began to sing in a quavering voice the chorus of the grim old buccaneers' song.

> It's bully boys, ho! and a deck splashed red—
> The devil is paid, quo' he, quo' he,
> A knife in the back and a mate swift sped!
> Heave yo ho! and away with me.

It must have been weird to hear the man, after so wicked and turbulent a life, troll from ashen lips the godless song of the old seadogs with whom he had broken all the commandments.

Only once after this did his mind come back to the present. A few minutes before the end the old pirate's eyes opened. He tried to whisper something, but could not. Feebly his hand tapped at something hard above his heart. Robert took from next the skin a package wrapped in oilcloth. Quinn's eyes lit.

In this was the map of Doubloon Spit.

Imagine now the situation on this ship of death. Three men only were left alive, and one of these so badly wounded that he leaped overboard in madness before morning. Of the remaining two, neither could sleep without the fear of murder in his heart.

Two days wore away, one holding the upper and the other the lower deck. Meanwhile the ship drifted, a derelict on the face of the Pacific.

At length an agreement was patched up. Slack and Wallace sailed the ship together, each with one eye on the other. It is certain that neither slept without locked and bolted doors.

On the fourth day after truce had been declared, land was sighted. While it was the boy's watch and the captain was asleep Wallace managed to lower a boat and paddle to the shore. He had scarcely reached the beach when a tropical storm swept across the waters. At daybreak the *Jennie Slack* was no longer in sight. Neither schooner nor owner was ever seen again.

Robert Wallace was picked up several days later by a Mexican sheepherder. In time he worked his way back to San Francisco. At the completion of the Union Pacific Railroad he left California for the South.

Here he engaged in business, forsook his vagabond habits, and in course of time married. No doubt it was always in his mind to have another try at the treasure, but time slipped away without his doing so. His happy marriage fettered him. Before he realized it, he was an old man. The most he could do was to leave the secret for his daughter.

The package was found by his executor sealed in a safety deposit box. He left instruction that it was to be opened by his daughter upon her twenty-first birthday.

A week before the events told in the first chapter she had reached her majority. In the presence of Boris Bothwell, whom she had lately met for the first time, the oilcloth package had been opened.

He had agreed to finance the expedition to Doubloon Spit and she had come to San Francisco with her aunt to make the voyage with him. Meanwhile, letters had reached her from Scotland which made clear the true character of Bothwell.

He had attempted twice to get possession of the map. His personal attention displeased her. They had quarreled, finally, on the morning of the episode of the second-story window.

CHAPTER V

WE FIND A SHIP

Partly from the diary of Robert Wallace and partly from the lips of his daughter I gathered the story set down in the two preceding chapters.

If I have given it with some detail, believe me, it is not because I care to linger over the shadow of tragedy that from the first hung about the ill-gathered treasure, but rather that you may understand clearly the issue facing us.

Some men would have turned their back upon the adventure and voted the gold well lost. I wanted to see the thing out to a finish.

I shall never deny that the personality of her who was to be my partner in the enterprise had something to do with the decision to which I came. The low, sweet voice of the Southland, the gay, friendly eyes, the piquant face, all young, all irresistibly eager and buoyant, would have won a less emotional man than Jack Sedgwick.

But why make apologies? After all, every man that lives has his great adventure, whether it come

garbed in drab or radiant with the glow of the sunrise. A prosaic, money-grubbing age we call this, but by the gods! romance hammers once in a lifetime at the door of every mother's son of us. There be those too niggardly to let her in, there be those to whom the knock comes faintly; and there be a happy few who fling wide the door and embrace her like a lover.

For me, I am Irish, as I have said. I cried "Aye!" and shook hands on the bargain. We would show Captain Boris Bothwell a thing or two. It would be odds but we would beat him to those chests hidden in the sand.

This was all very well, but one cannot charter and outfit a ship for a long cruise upon day-dreams. The moneyed men that I approached smiled and shook their wise gray heads. To them the whole story was no more than a castle in Spain. For two days I tramped the streets of San Francisco and haunted the offices of capitalists without profit to our enterprise.

On the afternoon of the third I retired, temporarily defeated, to my club, the Golden Gate. On my salary I had no business belonging to so expensive a club, but I had inherited from my college days a taste for good society and I gratified it at the expense of other desires.

In the billiard-room I ran across an acquaintance I had met for the first time on the Valdez trail some years earlier. His name was Samuel Blythe. By birth he was English, by choice cosmopolitan. Possessed of more money than he knew what to do with, he spent a great deal of time exploring unknown corners of the earth. He was as well known at Hong-Kong and Simla as in Paris and Vienna. Within the week he had returned to San Francisco from an attempt to reach the summit of Mount McKinley.

He was knocking balls about aimlessly.

"Shoot you a game of pool, Sedgwick," he proposed.

Then I had an inspiration.

"I can give you more fun for your money another way. Come into the library, Blythe."

There I told him the whole story. He heard me out without a smile. For that alone I could have thanked him. When I had finished he looked for a minute out of the window with a far-away expression in his eyes.

"It's a queer yarn," he said at last.

"And of course you don't believe a word of it?" I challenged.

"Don't I? Let me tell you this, old man. There are a number of rum things in this old world. I've

bucked up against two or three of them. Let me see your map."

I had made another copy of it, with the latitude and longitude omitted. This I handed to him.

While he examined it his eyes shone.

"By Jove, this *is* a lark. You can have the old tub if you want it."

He was referring to his splendid steam yacht the *Argos,* in which he had made the trip to Alaska.

"I haven't the price to outfit her and pay your crew," I explained.

"I have. You'll have to let me be your bank. But I say, Sedgwick, you'll need a sailing master. You're not a seaman."

Our eyes met

"Could Sam Blythe be persuaded to take the place?"

"Could I?" He got up and wrung my hand. "That's what I wanted you to say. Of course I'll go—jump at the chance."

"There's the chance of a nasty row. We're likely to meet Bothwell in that vicinity. If we do, there will be trouble."

"So I gather from your description of the gentleman."

I was delighted. Blythe was not only a good

navigator; he was a tried companion, true as steel, an interesting fellow who had passed through strange experiences but never used them to impress upon others a sense of his importance.

He had served through the Boer and the Spanish-American wars with distinction. As I looked at him—a spare tall man with a bronzed face of power, well-shouldered, clear-eyed, and light-footed—I felt he was the one out of ten thousand for my purpose.

"Too bad I didn't know a week ago. I've let my crew go. But we can pick up another. My sailing master Mott is a thoroughly reliable man. He'll look after the details. My opinion is that we ought to get under way as soon as possible. That fellow Bothwell is going to crowd on all sail in his preparations. I take it as a sure thing that he means to have a try for the treasure."

"My notion too. He struck me as a man of resource and determination."

"So much the better. He'll give us a run for our money. My dear fellow, you've saved my life. I was beginning to get bored to extinction. This will be a bully picnic."

"How long will it take you to get the yacht ready?"

"Give me a week to pick a crew and get sup-

plies aboard. I'll offer a bonus to get things pushed."

To see the enthusiasm he put into the adventure did me good after the three days of disappointment I had endured. I was eager to have him and Miss Wallace meet, and I got her at once on the telephone and made arrangements to bring him up after dinner to the private hotel where she and her aunt were stopping.

They took to each other at once. Inside of ten minutes we were all talking about our equipment for the trip.

"If we have a good run and the proper luck we'll be back to you with the treasure inside of a month, Miss Wallace," Blythe promised as he rose to leave.

"Back to me!" She looked first at him and then at me. "You don't think that I'm not going, too, do you?"

It is odd that the point had not come up before, but I had taken it for granted she would wait in 'Frisco for us.

"It's hardly a lady's job, I should say," was my smiling answer.

"Nonsense! Of course I am going." Sharp decision rang in her voice.

"It may be dangerous."

"Fiddlesticks! Panama is a tourist point of travel these days. Half of my schoolgirl chums have been there. It's as safe as—Atlantic City."

"Atlantic City isn't safe if one ventures too far out in the surf," I reminded her.

"I'll stick close to the life line," she promised.

Both Blythe and I were embarrassed. It was of course her right to go if she insisted. I appealed to her aunt, a plump, amiable lady nearer fifty than forty.

"Don't you think, Miss Berry, that it would be better to wait here for us? There would be discomforts to which you are not used."

"That is just what Boris told us," Evelyn put in mischievously.

Miss Berry gave a little shrug of her shoulders.

"Oh, I'd as soon stay here, but Evie will have her way." Her pleasant smile took from the words any sting they might otherwise have held.

"Of course I shall. This is a matter of business," Miss Wallace triumphantly insisted.

Excitement danced in her eyes. She might put it on commercial grounds if she liked, but the truth is that the romance of the quest had taken hold of her even as it had of us. One could not blame her for wanting to go.

I consulted Sam with my eyes.

"I suppose there is no absolute bar to letting the ladies go. There is room enough on the *Argos.*"

"There's plenty of room," he admitted.

After all it was fanciful to suppose that we should run across Bothwell on the face of the broad Pacific. Why shouldn't they have the pleasure of a month's yachting? Certainly their presence would make the voyage a more pleasant one for us.

"All right. Go if you must, but don't blame me if it turns out to be no picnic."

"Thank you, Mr. Sedgwick. That's just what it is going to be—a nice long picnic," the girl beamed.

"Wish I had your beautiful confidence. Have you forgotten Captain Bothwell? Shall we take him along, too?" I asked with a laugh.

"I'm afraid he would want all the cake. No, we'll not ask him to our picnic. He may stay at home."

"Let's hope he will," Miss Berry contributed cheerfully.

I don't think she gave the least weight to our fears of Bothwell. In fact he was rather a favorite of hers.

"If he comes he'll have to take what is left.

He understands he's not invited," Miss Wallace nodded gaily.

Blythe was fortunately able to secure his sailing master, Mott, and one of the crew that had sailed with him before, a man named Williams. The Englishman's valet, Morgan, went as steward. For the rest, we had to be content with such men as we could get hurriedly together.

Two brothers named Fleming were secured as engineers, a little cockney as fat as a prize pig for cook. He answered to the cognomen of 'Arry 'Iggins, though on the ship's register the letter H was the first initial of both his names. Caine, the boatswain, was a sinister-looking fellow, but he knew his business. Taken as a whole, the crew appeared to average well enough.

From long practice Blythe was an adept at outfitting a yacht for a cruise. Without going into details I'll only say that we carried very little that was superfluous and lacked nothing that would tend to increase our comfort.

I am no sailor, but it did not take a professional eye to see that the *Argos* was a jewel of a boat. Of her seagoing qualities I knew nothing except by repute, but her equipment throughout was of the best. She was a three-masted schooner with two funnels, fitted with turbines and Yarrow

boilers. To get eighteen knots out of her was easy, and I have seen her do twenty in a brisk wind.

In addition to her main deck the *Argos* carried a topgallant forecastle and a bridge, the latter extended on stanchions from the main deck to the sides of the ship so as to give plenty of space for games or promenades. The bridge contained a reception and a tea room, which were connected by a carved stairway with the deck below.

The rooms of the commander, the cook, and other servants lay well forward under the bridge. Abaft of these were the kitchen and the pantry, the dining room, the saloon, and the rooms of the owner and his guests.

The conventional phrase "a floating palace" will do well enough to describe the interior of this turbine yacht. No reasonable man could have asked more of luxury than was to be found in the well-designed bath rooms, in the padded library with its shelves of books, its piano and music rack, and in the smoking room arranged to satisfy the demands of the most fastidious.

I had resigned my place with Kester & Wilcox to help push the preparation for our departure, but I was still spending a good deal of my time in the office cleaning up some matters upon which I

had been working. Much of the time I was down at the docks, and when I could not be there my thoughts were full of the *Argos* and her voyage.

Since I was giving my time to the firm without pay I took the liberty of using the boy Jimmie to run errands for me. Journeying back and forth to the wharf with messages and packages, he naturally worked up a feverish interest in our cruise, even though he did not know the object of it. When he came out point-blank one morning with a request to go with us as cabin boy I was not surprised. I sympathized with Master Jimmie's desire, but I very promptly put the lid on his hopes.

"Nothing doing, Mr. James A. Garfield Welch."

"You've gotter have a kid to run errands for youse, Mr. Sedgwick," he pleaded.

"No use talking, Jimmie. You're not going."

"All right," he acquiesced meekly.

Too meekly, it occurred to me later.

CHAPTER VI

THE MISSING CORNER

Blythe and I had agreed that Bothwell would not let us get away without first making an effort to get hold of the original map of Doubloon Spit. He was nobody's fool, and there was no doubt but he had very soon detected the trick his cousin had played upon him.

Since the chart was in a safety-deposit vault we felt pretty sure of ourselves, for he would have to secure it between the time we took it out and our arrival on the *Argos,* at best a spare half hour in the middle of the day. But since the captain did not know what we had done with the document, it was a good guess that he would have a try at searching for it.

On the evening of the third day before we were due to sail, Blythe and I took Miss Berry and her niece to the opera and afterward to a little supper at a cozy French restaurant just round the corner from the Chronicle Building.

It was well past midnight when we reached the

hotel where the ladies had their rooms. Miss Wallace had no sooner flung open the door than she gave an exclamation of amazement.

The room had been fairly turned upside down. Drawers had been emptied, searched, and their contents dumped down in one corner. Rugs had been torn up. Even the upholstery of chairs and the lounge had been ripped. The inner room was in the same condition. A thorough, systematic examination had been made of every square inch of the apartment. It had been carried so far that the linings of gowns had been cut away and the trimming of hats plucked off.

"A burglar!" gasped Miss Berry.

"Let's give him a name. Will Captain Boris Bothwell do?" I asked of Blythe.

The Englishman nodded.

"You've rung the bell at the first shot, Sedgwick."

"Oh, I don't think it," Miss Berry protested. "Captain Bothwell is too much of a gentleman to destroy a lady's things wantonly. Just look at this hat!"

Evelyn laughed at her wail. It happened not to be her hat.

"It's dear Boris, all right. I wonder if he left his card?"

"Shall we call in the police?" her aunt asked.

Miss Wallace questioned me with her eyes.

"Might as well," I assented. "Not that it will make a bit of difference, but it will satisfy the hotel people. Probably it would be as well not to mention our suspicions."

So we had the police in. They talked and took notes and asked questions, and at last went away with the omniscient air peculiar to officers of the law the world over. They had decided it was the work of Nifty Jim, a notorious diamond thief at that time honoring San Francisco with his presence.

Over a cigar in my rooms Blythe and I talked the matter out. Bothwell had made the first move. Soon he would make another, for of course he would search my place at the Graymount. The question was whether to keep the rooms guarded or to let him have a clear field. We decided on the latter.

"How far will the man go? That's the question." My friend looked at his cigar tip speculatively. "Will he have you knocked on the head to see if you are carrying it?"

"He will if he can," I told him promptly. "But I'm taking no chances. I carry a revolver."

"Did you happen to notice that we were followed to-night?"

"That's nothing new. They've been dogging me ever since I got the map. But I play a pretty careful game."

"I would," Blythe agreed gravely. "I say. Let me stay with you here till we get off. Better be sure than sorry."

"Glad to have you, though I don't think it's necessary."

It may have been five minutes later that I suddenly sat bolt upright in my chair. An idea had popped into my head, one so bold that it might have been borrowed from Bothwell's lawless brain.

"I say. Let's play this out with Captain Boris his own way. Let's just remind him we're on earth too."

"Meaning——"

My eyes danced.

"I'm as good a burglar as he is, and so are you."

Blythe waited.

"He doesn't give a tinker's dam for the law," I continued. "Good enough! We'll take a leaf out of his book. To-morrow night you have an engagement—to ransack the captain's rooms."

"What for?"

"To get that corner of a map he stole from

his cousin. Part of the directions for finding the treasure are on it."

"But Miss Wallace has another copy."

"An inaccurate one. Her father changed the directions on purpose in case some one found it."

Blythe smoked for a minute without answering.

"You're a devilish cool hand, Sedgwick. I'm a law-abiding citizen myself."

"And so am I—when the other fellow will let me. But if a chap hits me on the head with a bit of scantling I'll not stop to look for a policeman."

"Just so. I was about to say that since I'm a law-abiding citizen it's my duty to take from Bothwell the goods he has stolen. I'm with you to search his rooms for that paper."

Underneath his British phlegm I could see that he was as keen on the thing as Jack Sedgwick. Looking back on it from this distance, it seems odd that two reputable citizens should have adventured into housebreaking so gaily as we did.

But Bothwell had brought it on himself, and both of us were eager to show him he had some one more formidable than a young woman to deal with. Moreover, there is something about the very name of buried treasure that knocks the pins of respectability from under a man.

Up to date I had led the normal life of a super-civilized city dweller, but within a fortnight I was to shoot a man down and count it just part of the day's work. None of us knows how strong the savage is in us until we are brought up against life in the raw.

My trailers followed me about next day as usual, but I chuckled whenever I saw them. For we were doing a little sleuthing ourselves. I borrowed Jimmie from the firm and the little gamin kept tab on Bothwell.

The captain did not leave his room until nearly midday, but as soon as he had turned the corner next to his hotel, the Argonaut, on the way to his breakfast-lunch, Jimmie dodged in at the side entrance, slipped up the stairs and along a corridor, up a second and a third flight by the back way, down another passage, and stopped at a room numbered 417.

With him he had a great bunch of keys similar to those used in that hotel. One after another he tried these, stopping whenever he heard approaching footsteps to hide the keys under his coat. Several persons passed, but found nothing unusual in the sight of a boy knocking innocently on a door.

At last Jimmie found a key which turned in

the socket. That was all he wanted. Relocking the door he went down the stairs to the street, his fingers tightly clenched around the key that fitted. Nor did he take the little closed fist out of his coat pocket until he and I were alone together in my office, from whence he departed two dollars richer than he had entered.

Jimmie having been retired from duty, Blythe took his place in watching Bothwell. He engaged a room on the fourth floor of the Argonaut, from which he was able to observe the coming and going of the enemy.

My work at the office finished, I took a car for the Graymount, followed as usual by one of the detectives that for days had dogged me. My attendant on this occasion was a shrimp of a man with a very wrinkled face and a shock of red hair. Some imp of deviltry in me moved me to change my seat for one beside his.

"A pleasant day," I suggested to open the conversation.

He agreed that it was.

"I suppose your kind of work is always more cheerful in good weather," I went on.

"My kind of work!" Plainly he was disconcerted at my remark.

"Yes. Must be devilish unpleasant shadowing

a man in cold weather. Don't you have to wait outside houses sometimes for hours at a stretch?"

The palm of his hand rasped a stubbly chin as he looked askance at me.

"Why—er—I don't know what you mean."

"Don't you?" I laughed in his face. "Come now, let's put aside the little fiction that I'm not wise to your game. I'm not at all annoyed at the attentions you pay me. It's entirely a matter of business with you. I suppose I'm good for about five dollars a day to you. Faith, that's more than I've ever been able to earn for myself. Sorry I'm leaving these parts soon—on your account."

He did not at all know how to take me, but he earnestly assured me that I was quite mistaken. He was a carpenter by trade.

"Why not make it as easy for you as we can?" I chuckled. "Come in to the Graymount and have dinner with me. Our café isn't what it should be, but it will pass at a pinch. What do you say?"

He said that I was making game of him.

"Not at all," I assured him. "I'm merely trying to lighten the load of honest labor. Well, if you won't, you won't. After dinner I'm going to my rooms to smoke a cigar. About nine—or somewhere near that time—I'll be going out for an hour. Are your instructions to follow me?"

"You're all wrong about me, sir. I don't know any more than a rabbit what you are talking about."

"I was only going to say that if you care to go I'll try to arrange for another place at our little party."

He was, I judged, glad to get rid of me at my corner. It had been his instruction to leave the car there too, no doubt, but my discovery of him drove the little man one block farther. I waited till he got off and waved a hand at him before I walked to the Graymount. For me it had been a very entertaining little adventure, but I am inclined to think he found it embarrassing.

The program of my movements which I had given him was accurate enough. Dinner finished, I went to my room for a cigar, after which I called up a taxi.

I selected an ulster with a deep collar, and in the right hand pocket I dropped a revolver, but not before I had carefully examined the weapon.

As I stepped into the taxi the vest-pocket edition of Nick Carter with whom I had ridden up from the city a few hours earlier darted out from the alley where he had been lurking. Again I waved a hand derisively toward him. The chauffeur threw in the clutch and we moved swiftly

down the hill. The little sleuth wheeled off in the direction of the nearest drug store.

"He's going to call up Bothwell to tell him I've gone," was my guess.

For perhaps a quarter of an hour I had the chauffeur drive me about the city, now fast, now slow, crossing and recrossing our track half a dozen times. When I was finally convinced that no other car was following mine I paid the driver and dismissed him.

Catching the nearest street car I rode down to Market Street. It was a cool night, so that I was justified in turning up my coat collar in such a way as to conceal partially my face.

Inconspicuously I stepped into the Argonaut and up the stairs to Blythe's room.

Sam met me at the door and nodded in the direction of No. 417.

"He went out half an hour ago."

"I'll bet he got a telephone message from little Nick Carter first," I grinned.

Three minutes later we were in Bothwell's room. Since it was probable that he was making himself at home in mine it seemed only fair that we should do as much in his.

We did. If there was a nook or corner within those four walls we did not examine I do not

know where it could have been. Every drawer was opened and searched for secret places. Bedposts, legs of chairs and tables, all the woodwork, had to undergo a microscopic scrutiny. The walls were sounded for cavities. We probed the cushions with long fine needles and tore the spreads from the beds. The carpet and the floor underneath were gone over thoroughly. Blythe even took the frame of the mirror to pieces to make sure that the shred of paper we wanted did not lie between the glass and the boards behind.

At last I found our precious document. It was in the waste-paper basket among some old bills, a torn letter, some half smoked cigarettes, and a twisted copy of that afternoon's *Call*. Bothwell had thrust it down among this junk because he shrewdly guessed a waste-paper basket the last place one would likely look for a valuable chart.

To deprive him of it seemed a pity, so we merely made a copy of what we wanted and left him the original buried again in the junk where he had hidden it.

My watch showed that it was now between one and two o'clock. Since Bothwell might now be back at any time we retired to Blythe's room and *learned by heart* the torn fragment of directions.

This did not take us long for there was nothing

on the faded corner but these letters and words:

wh
12
Take
Forked
till Tong of
west to Big Rock

In the milkman hours we slipped from the hotel and took a car for the Graymount. My rooms were a sight. Some one—and I could put a name to him—had devastated them as a cyclone does a town in the middle West. The wreckage lay everywhere, tossed hither and thither as the searchers had flung away the articles after an examination. Blythe laughed.

"The middle name of our friend Bothwell must be thorough. He hasn't overlooked anything, by Jove."

"Oh, well, it's our inning anyhow," I grinned. "He didn't get what he wanted, and we know it. We did get what we wanted, and he doesn't know it." The Englishman flung himself down into a Morris chair and reached for my cigarettes.

"On the whole I rather fancy our new profession, Jack. I wonder if Captain Bothwell will send our photographs to the chief of police for his rogues' gallery."

CHAPTER VII

IN THE FOG

The day before we sailed I spent an hour aboard the *Argos* arranging my things in my cabin. While returning in one of the yacht's boats I caught sight through the fog of two figures standing on the wharf.

I had a momentary impression that one of these was our chief engineer, George Fleming, but when I scrambled ashore only one of the two was in sight. The one I had taken to be our engineer had sheered off into the fog.

The outline of the other bulked large in the heavy mist, partly because of the big overcoat, no doubt. I had a feeling that I ought to know the man, but it was not until he stepped forward to me that I recognized him.

"A pleasant evening if one doesn't object to fog, Mr. Sedgwick," he said, lifting his hat and bowing.

"It's you, is it?" I answered, coolly enough.

"Thought I'd drop down and see how you are

getting along. The *Argos* looks like a good sailor. I congratulate you."

"Thanks."

"You sail to-morrow, I understand."

"Since you know already I'll save myself the trouble of telling you."

"Sharp work, Mr. Sedgwick. I needed only one good look at you to know you were a first-class man for this sort of thing."

"I am delighted that my work pleases Captain Bothwell."

He passed my irony with a laugh.

"Oh, I didn't say it pleased me. I'm after the treasure myself, and I'm going to get it. But I'm not a fool. I can appreciate even an enemy when I find him on the job."

"And of course your appreciation won't keep you from sticking a knife in him if you find it necessary."

"Of course not. I said I wasn't a fool," he admitted easily.

We were standing on the edge of the wharf, shut out from the world by a fog bank that left us to all intents alone. It was an uncanny place to meet one's dearest enemy. Faintly I could still hear the splashing of the oars as the boat that had brought me ashore moved back to the *Argos*.

Otherwise no sound but the lapping of the waves at the piles broke the silence.

Our eyes met straight as a plummet falls. Each of us had his right hand in his overcoat pocket. I can't swear to what was in his fingers, but I felt a good deal safer for what was in mine. My back was still toward the bay, for I had a vision of the man who had disappeared—whoever he might be—slipping up through the white fog and sticking a knife between my shoulder-blades.

The captain gave me his friendliest smile.

"But you needn't be afraid. What would it profit me to get rid of you here? I don't suppose you have the map with you?"

At the last words his black eyes stabbed at me a question.

I shook my head.

"No, it wouldn't be worth while murdering me now to get the map. I'm not a fool either, captain. It isn't on me."

"So I judged. Then you may make your mind easy—for the present."

"I'm not so sure about that. Wouldn't it pay you to put me out of the road, anyhow? You'll not get the treasure so long as I'm alive, you know."

"There you touch my vanity, Mr. Sedgwick.

I'm of a contrary opinion. Dead or alive you can't keep me from it."

"Have you never noticed, captain, that in this world a man's opportunities do not always match his inclinations?"

"I've noticed that a man gets what he wants if he is strong enough to take it."

"So far as I know you have made four attempts to get the map. Have you got it?"

"Not yet. Plenty of time though. When I need it I'll get it."

My skeptical laugh must have annoyed him.

"Then you'd better get busy if it's true that we sail to-morrow."

"Hope you'll have a pleasant trip."

"Thanks. Sorry we can't ask you, captain. But there really isn't room and our party is full. No doubt you'll be starting on a little jaunt of your own soon?"

"Yes, to-morrow, too, as it happens. Perhaps we may meet again. It's a small world after all, Mr. Sedgwick."

"We'll look out for you."

"Do. And go prepared for squalls. One never knows what may happen. The Pacific is treacherous. Likely enough you'll meet dirty weather."

"I'm thinking you're right. But the yacht is good for it."

"And the yacht's passengers?" he asked with angled brows.

"We're all good sailors."

"But isn't there a good deal of yellow fever in Panama?"

"Not now. There used to be."

"Haven't I heard of pirates in the Isthmus country?" he asked, smiling with superb impudence.

"That's in the past too, captain; but if we meet any, the vermin will be glad to sheer off. I'll promise you that."

The villain drew a breath of mock relief.

"That makes my mind easier, Mr. Sedgwick. I'll confess I've been a little troubled for you."

"Thanks for your kind thoughts, but I'm confident we can look out for ourselves."

Our words had been light enough, but be sure there was no laughter in the eyes that fastened each pair to the other. For me, I never was more vigilant in my life—and Bothwell knew it.

"Going up-town, captain? If not I'll say good evening."

He nodded genially.

"Pleasant voyage. And *do* be careful of the squalls and the fever and the pirates. Do you

know I can't help thinking you had better leave Evie at home for me to take care of."

"But you're leaving, too, I understood you to say. No, we'll take good care of her. I give you my word on that."

I had been edging round him with the intention of backing away. He held out his hand, but—well, my fingers were otherwise engaged. They still caressed a knobby bit of metal in my overcoat pocket.

At the last moment, so it appeared, he yielded to an impulse.

"Must we really be in opposite camps, Mr. Sedgwick? Come! Let's arrange a compromise. Neither of us alone has enough to go on. You need me and my scrap of map. I need you and your bit of chart. We'll consolidate forces and go to Panama together."

"Afraid you're a little late, captain. You play your hand and we'll play ours."

I had been increasing the distance between us. Now I turned sharply on my heel and walked away almost at a run, for I did not like the idea of taking with me a bullet in the small of my back.

At the end of the wharf a figure brushed past me. Night had begun to fall, and in the gray dusk I could not make sure, but again I was oddly

struck by its resemblance to our engineer, Fleming. I slued around my head to look a second time, but the fog had already swallowed him. Strange, I thought, that he had not recognized me; but perhaps, if the man was Fleming, he had found me too indistinct to know.

At any rate it was a matter of no great importance. I pushed past the warehouse to take an up-town car.

CHAPTER VIII

ABOARD THE ARGOS

Blythe and I had agreed that an attempt would be made to relieve us of the map while we were carrying it from the safety-deposit vault to the ship. So far as we could see it was Bothwell's last chance to gain possession of the coveted chart, and he was not the man to leave a stone unturned.

At half past three we drove in the car of a friend to the International Safe Deposit Company's place of business. He waited outside while we went in to reclaim the document.

Five minutes later we reappeared, the paper in the inside pocket of my tightly buttoned coat. My eyes explored to right and left.

The thunder of trolley cars, the rumble of wholesale wagons, the buzz of automobiles, all made their contribution to the roar of the busy cañon up and down which men and women passed by hundreds. That Bothwell would make an attempt at a hold-up here seemed inconceivable. But if not here, then—where? He had to have the map or give up the fight.

Blythe followed me into the tonneau and our car swept out into the stream of traffic. Less than a quarter of an hour later we stepped down from the machine, shook hands with our friend, and took the boat which was waiting for us at the wharf. Even now we were alert, ready for any emergency that might occur.

Nothing happened, except our safe arrival at the *Argos*. Miss Wallace and her aunt were on deck to welcome us. Sam and I exchanged rather sheepish glances. Nobody likes to be caught making a mountain out of a mole hill, and that was apparently what we had done. Our elaborate preparations to defend the map during the past half hour had been unnecessary.

"Tide right, Mr. Mott?" Blythe asked.

"All right, sir."

"Then we'll start at once."

I retired to my cabin, disposed of a certain document, and presently returned to the deck. The engines were throbbing and the *Argos* was beginning to creep.

"We're off," I said to Miss Wallace, who was standing by my side on the bridge deck leaning upon the rail.

"Yes, we're off. Luck with us," she cried softly with shining eyes.

I looked at her and smiled. The excitement that burned in her I could understand, since I too shared it. We were answering the call of the sea and its romance was tingling in our blood. Into what wild waters we were to be whirled none of us had the slightest guess. It was fortunate that the future was screened by a veil behind which we could not peep.

The quiver of the engines grew stronger. The *Argos* was walking smartly out into the bay, her funnels belching black smoke. A stiff wind was blowing and the vessel leaped as she took the waves. Behind us in the falling dusk the lights of the city began to come out like stars.

"I wonder when we'll see her again," my companion said softly, her gaze on the hill of twinkling lights.

Like a Winged Victory her fine, lithe figure was outlined by the wind, which had flung back the white skirt against the slender limbs, showing the flowing lines as she moved. In her jaunty yachting cap, the heavy chestnut hair escaping in blowing tendrils, a warmer color whipped into her soft cheeks by the breeze, there was a sparkle to her gayety, a champagne tang to her animation. One guessed her an Ionian goddess of the sea

reincarnated in the flesh of a delightful American girl.

It was this impression on me that gave the impetus to my answer.

"Not too soon, I hope."

Miss Berry joined us. I tucked her arm under mine and the three of us tramped the promenade deck. Mott went down to his dinner and Blythe took the wheel. My friend was an experienced sailor, and he had that dash of daring which somehow never results in disaster. We could see the men scurrying to and fro at his orders. The white sails began to belly out with the whistling wind.

Blythe roared an order down the speaking tube and swung round the spokes of the wheel. Straight toward the Golden Gate we sprang, bowling along with increasing speed. Past Tamalpais we scudded and through the narrows, out to the fresh Pacific like a bloodhound taking the scent.

"By the way she's going the *Argos* smells treasure at our journey's end," I laughed.

"Oh, I like this! Isn't it glorious?" the girl murmured.

"You come of sailor blood," I reminded her. "Many a girl would be in the hands of the ship's doctor already."

"Didn't know we had a doctor on board."

"Morgan will have to serve in lieu of one. But there goes the dinner gong. We must go and get ready."

"I suppose so," she sighed regretfully. "But it's a pity to miss a moment of this. Do you see that glow on the water? Is that why it's called the Golden Gate?"

"I fancy the argonauts called it that because it was the passage through which they passed on their way to the gold fields. And for the same reason we can give it that name too."

We moved to the stairway, which was in the pavilion, and descended to our rooms on the main deck.

As soon as I had entered mine I switched on the light and threw off my coat. Collar and tie followed the coat into the berth. I passed into the bath room and washed. At the moment I flung the towel back on the rack a sound came to me from my bedroom. I turned quickly, to see a diminutive figure roll from the back of the bed and untangle itself from my coat.

"Please, I'm awful sick, Mr. Sedgwick," a voice lugubriously groaned.

I stood staring at the little yellow face. The forlorn urchin was our office boy, Jimmie Welch.

"You young cub, what are you doing here?" I demanded.

"I'm a stowaway," he groaned. "Like Hall Hiccup, the Boy Pirate, you know. But, by crickey, I wouldn't a come if I'd a known it would be like this."

"Didn't I tell you that you couldn't come? How did you get here?"

"Golly, I'm sick! I'm going to die."

"Serves you right, you young rascal."

I didn't blow him up any more just then. Instead I hurriedly offered first aid to the seasick. He felt a little better after that.

"I told Mr. Mott you had sent me on an errand. He thought I'd gone ashore again, mebbe."

"That's where you'll go as soon as we reach San Pedro."

"Yes, sir. Hope so." He groaned woefully. "Thought you'd need a cabin boy, sir, but I'll never do it again, s'elp me."

"I'm going to give you a licking as soon as you get well. Don't forget that. Now I have to leave you. I'll be back after a while. Go to sleep if you can."

By reason of Jimmie I reached the dinner table as the soup was being removed. Only four of us messed in the cabin. Mott, the engineers,

and Morgan had a separate table of their own aft.

"Late already, my boy. This won't do. Ship's discipline, you know. Make a report and clear yourself," Blythe called out as I entered.

"My patient seems a bit better," I announced, sitting down opposite Miss Wallace.

"Your patient?" that young woman repeated.

"Yes, I find I have a guest to share my cabin with me, and he has begun by yielding to an attack of *mal-de-mer*."

"Is this a conundrum? I'm not good at them." This from Miss Berry.

"No, it's a stowaway. The conundrum is to know what to do with the little rascal."

"Meaning who?"

"James A. Garfield Welch. I found him tucked away in my berth, very much the worse for wear."

The Englishman helped himself to asparagus tips and laughed.

"He's certainly a persevering young beggar. He hung around me for three days trying to persuade me to take him. Now he's here on French leave."

"He'll have to make himself useful, now he's here. The little idiot imagines himself a sort of boy pirate, so he explained to me. I'm going to try to introduce a little sense into his system by means of a strap applied to the cuticle."

"Oh, I wouldn't," Evelyn begged quickly. "Poor fellow! I daresay he wanted to come as badly as we did."

"He happens to have a mother," I added dryly. "She's no doubt worrying her life out about the young pirate. I really think we owe him a licking on her account."

"Poor woman! She must be feeling dreadfully. Isn't there any way of letting her know that he is safe?" Miss Berry asked.

"We'll have to call in at San Pedro, though that means the loss of a day. We can send the youngster home from Los Angeles," Blythe suggested.

"If his mother is willing, Jimmie might go on with us. He would be useful to run errands," Evelyn proposed.

"Jimmie has a staunch friend in you, Miss Wallace. We'll think it over. There's plenty of time before we reach Los Angeles," our captain answered. "He can take the upper berth in the cook's cabin. Have him moved after dinner, Morgan."

We lingered after dinner till the second dog watch was over, when Blythe excused himself to go on deck. I soon followed him, for though I am no sailor I was rated as second officer on the *Argos,* Mott being the first.

I had not yet had a good view of the crew and

I looked them over carefully as Blythe divided them in watches. They appeared a lively enough lot, though it struck me that one or two showed sullen faces.

Caine, the boatswain, was a villainous looking fellow, due in part to the squint of his eyes that set them at different angles. But he turned out a thoroughly capable man with a knack of getting out of the men all that was in them.

Under Mott's supervision I took a turn at the wheel, for I did not intend, if I could help it, to be deadwood throughout the whole cruise. I could see Miss Wallace pacing the deck with Blythe for hours, his cigar tip glowing in the darkness as they advanced toward the wheel house. I would have liked to join them, but I had set out to make of myself enough of a sailor to serve at a pinch, and I stuck to my task. It was late when I reached my cabin. I must have fallen asleep at once, for it was day again before I knew anything more.

We met at breakfast, the four of us, and not one but was touched by the loveliness of which we were the center. It was not a new story to Blythe—this blue arched roof of sky, this broad stretch of sea, this warm sun on a day cool enough to invigorate the blood—but he too showed a lively pleasure in it.

Miss Berry took some fancy work and a magazine with her on deck and spent the morning placidly in a steamer chair, but her niece and I were too full of our pleasure to rest so contentedly.

To any who have sailed on the glassy breast of the Pacific day after day, knowing all the little pleasures of life aboard a well-found turbine yacht, a description would be superfluous; to one who has never known it, such an attempt would be entirely futile. By either alternative I am debarred from trying to set down the delight of our days, the glory of our nights of stars.

CHAPTER IX

BOTHWELL MAKES A MOVE

We put into San Pedro in the early morning and tied up opposite the *Harvard*. Blythe and I ran up to Los Angeles on the electric, taking Jimmie Welch with us.

No matter how well one may be equipped for an expedition, every port touched finds needs to be satisfied. After I had wired Mrs. Welch that her hopeful was safe and would be returned to her or retained as ship's boy at her desire, I spent the morning executing commissions for the ladies and attending to little matters that needed looking after.

We made an appointment to lunch at one of Los Angeles' numberless cafeterias. I went out of my way to the telegraph office to get the answer from Mrs. Welch, for which reason I was a few minutes late to luncheon.

A stranger to me was sitting opposite Blythe. My friend introduced him as Mr. Yeager, known all over Arizona as Tom Yeager. It appeared that

he had come to the coast with a couple of carloads of steers, having disposed of which, time was hanging heavy on his hands.

Anybody who has lived in the cattle country knows the Yeager type. He was a brown, lithe man, all sinew, bone and muscle. His manner was easy and indifferent, but out of his hard face cool, quiet eyes judged men and situations competently.

Over many straight and crooked trails his thirty-five years had brought him without shame. No doubt he had often skirted the edge of law, but even when he had been a scamp his footsteps had followed ways justified by his code.

I gathered from their talk that Blythe and he had served together in the Rough Riders during the Spanish War. They were exchanging reminiscences and Jimmie Welch was listening open-mouthed to their conversation.

"Say, ain't he a peacherino, Mr. Sedgwick," whispered my young hopeful. "Get onto those muscles of his. I'll bet he's got a kick like a mule in either mitt. Say, him and Teddy Roosevelt must 'a' made the dagoes sick down in Cuba."

More jokes and stories of camp life passed back and forth.

"Do you reckon he ever killed a Spaniard?" Jimmie murmured to me.

"Better ask him," I suggested.

But at thought of this audacity to his hero the young pirate collapsed. I put the question for him.

The cowman grinned.

"Only one, Jimmie. And he ain't all mine. Me and a fellow called the Honorable Samuel Blythe was out scouting one day while we were pushing through the tangle of brush toward Santiago. I reckon we got too anxious. Anyhow, we bumped into an ambush and it was a swift hike for us back to the lines. The bullets were fair raining through the leaves above us. Recollect, Sam?"

Blythe nodded.

"Rather. Whenever I think of it pins and needles run down my back."

"Well, we cut a blue streak for camp, those fellows after us on the jump. I used to think I was some runner, but the Honorable Samuel set me right that day. He led good and strong, me burning the wind behind and 'steen Spaniards spread out in the rear. A fat little cuss was leading them, and the way he plowed through that underbrush was a caution. You want to remember, Jimmie, that the thermometer was about a hundred and fifty in the shade. I went till I was fit to drop, then looked round and saw Don Fatty right close. I

hadn't invited him to my party, so I cracked away at him with my gun."

"And you killed him," Jimmie breathed, his eyes popping out.

"Killed nothing," answered the Arizonian in disgust. "I missed him a mile, but he was so plumb discouraged with the heat and with running his laigs off that he up and laid down and handed in his checks. He's the only Spaniard I've got to my credit and Mr. Blythe here always claimed half of him because he ran faster."

"You're kidding me," announced Jimmie promptly.

"Well, I've always had a kind a suspicion myself that mebbe he had just fainted. But I like to figure it out that I destroyed one of my country's enemies that day, with a leetle help from my friend here."

While Yeager was joyously fabricating this yarn Blythe had been writing on the back of an envelope. This he now shoved quietly across to me.

He's as well-plucked as they make them, Jack—and straight as a string. Want to make him a proposition to join us?

Those were the lines he had penciled on the envelope. Beneath them I wrote two words: "Suits me."

Jimmie's mother had consented to let him go on with us. Now I took him away to get some necessary wearing apparel, leaving Blythe to make a proposition to Yeager.

"Your mother says I'm in full charge of you. That means I'm to lick you whenever you need it," I told Jimmie, for I had already discovered that my young sleuth needed considerable repressing from time to time.

"Yes, sir. I'll do whatever you say," agreed Young America, who was long since over his seasickness and was again eager for the voyage.

The Englishman nodded when I saw him an hour later.

"Tom's in with us."

"He understands this ain't a pleasure excursion, doesn't he?" I asked.

"Folks take their pleasure different, Mr. Sedgwick," drawled the cowman. "I shouldn't wonder but I might enjoy this little cruise even if it gets lively."

"My opinion is that it may get as lively as one of your own broncos," I explained.

"I'll certainly hope for the worst," he commented.

I turned Jimmie over to my friends and spent the afternoon with a college classmate who was

doing newspaper work on the *Herald*. In looking up a third man who also had belonged to our fraternity, time slipped away faster than we had noticed. It was getting along toward sunset when I separated from my friends to take the interurban for San Pedro at the big electric station. Before my car reached the port, dusk was falling.

Whistling as I went, I walked briskly down the hill toward the wharf. As I passed an alley my name was called. I stopped in my stride and turned. Then a jagged bolt of fire seared my brain. My knees sagged. I groped in the darkness, staggering as I moved. About that time I must have lost consciousness.

When I came to myself I was lying in the alley and a man was going through my clothes. A second man directed him from behind a revolver leveled at my head. Both of them were masked.

"I tell you it ain't on him," the first man was saying.

"We want to make dead sure of that, mate," the other answered.

"If he's got it the damned thing is sewed beneath his skin," retorted the first speaker.

"He's coming to. We'll take his papers and his pocketbook and set sail," the leader decided.

I could hear their retreating footsteps echo down

the alley and was quite sensible of the situation without being able to rise, or even cry out. For five minutes perhaps I lay there before I was sufficiently master of myself to get up. This I did very uncertainly, a little at a time, for my head was still spinning like a top. Putting my hand to the back of it I was surprised to discover that my palm was red with blood.

As I staggered down to the wharf I dare say the few people who met me concluded I was a drunken sailor. The *Argos* was lying at the opposite side of the slip, but two of our men were waiting for me with a boat. One of them was the boatswain Caine, the other a deckhand by the name of Johnson.

"Split me, but Mr. Sedgwick has been hurt. What is it, sir? Did you fall?" the boatswain asked.

"Waylaid and knocked in the head," I answered, sinking down into the stern on account of a sudden attack of dizziness.

Caine was tying up my head with a handkerchief when the mists cleared again from my brain.

"All right, sir. A nasty crack, but you'll be better soon. I've sent Johnson up to have a lookout for the guys that done it," the boatswain told me cheerily.

"No use. They've gone to cover long since. Call him back and let's get across to the ship."

"Yes, sir. That will be better."

He called, and presently Johnson came back.

"Seen anything of the scoundrels, Johnson?" demanded Caine.

"Not a thing."

I had been readjusting the handkerchief, but I happened to look up unexpectedly. My glance caught a flash of meaning that passed between the two. It seemed to hint at a triumphant mockery of my plight.

"Caine is a deep-sea brute, mean-hearted enough to be pleased at what has happened," I thought peevishly. Later I learned how wide of the mark my interpretation of that look had been.

A chorus of welcome greeted me as I passed up the gangway to the deck of the *Argos*. One voice came clear to me from the rest. It had in it the sweet drawl of the South.

"You're late again, Mr. Sedgwick. And—what's the matter with your head?"

"Nothing worth mentioning, Miss Wallace. Captain Bothwell has been trying to find what is inside of it. I think he found sawdust."

"You mean——"

"Knocked in the head as I came down to the

wharf. Serves me right for being asleep at the switch. Think I'll run down to my room and wash the blood off."

Yeager offered to examine the wound. He had had some experience in broken heads among the boys at his ranch, he said.

"Perhaps I could dress the hurt. I had a year's training as a nurse," suggested Miss Wallace, a little shyly.

"Mr. Yeager is out of a job," I announced promptly.

The girl blushed faintly.

"We'll work together, Mr. Yeager."

She made so deft a surgeon that I was sorry when her cool, firm fingers had finished with the bandages. Nevertheless, I had a nasty headache and was glad to get to bed after drinking a cup of tea and eating a slice of toast.

CHAPTER X

ANOTHER STOWAWAY

Southward ho! Before the trade winds we scudded day after day, past Catalina Island and San Diego, past Santa Margarita lying like a fog bank on the offing, out into the warm sunshine of the tropical Pacific.

We promised ourselves that after the treasure had been lifted and we were headed again for the Golden Gate, our sails should have a chance to show what they could do alone, but now Blythe was using all his power to drive the *Argos* forward.

What plans Bothwell might have we did not know, but we were taking no chances of reaching Doubloon Spit too late. If we succeeded in getting what we had come after there would be plenty of time to dawdle.

No days in my life stand out as full of enjoyment as those first ones off the coast of Lower California and Mexico. Under a perfect sky we sailed serenely. Our fears of Bothwell had vanished. We had shaken him off and held the winning hand

in the game we had played with him. The tang of the sea spume, of the salt-laden spray was on our lips; the songs of youth were in our hearts.

Every hour that I was not on duty, except those given to necessary sleep, I spent in the company of Evelyn Wallace. Usually her aunt was also present, and either Blythe or Yeager. That did not matter in the least, so long as my golden-brown beauty was near, so long as I could watch the dimples flash in her cheeks and the little nose crinkle to sudden mirth, or could wait for the sweep of the long lashes that would bring round to mine the lovely eyes, tender and merry and mocking by turns.

Faith, I'll make a clean breast of it. I was already fathoms deep in love, and my lady did not in the least particularly seem to favor me. There were moments when hope was strong in me. I magnified a look, a word, the eager life in her, to the significance my heart desired, but reason told me that she gave the same friendly comradeship to Blythe and Yeager.

It is possible that the absorption in this new interest dulled my perception of external matters. So at least Sam hinted to me one night after the ladies had retired. Mott was at the wheel, a game of solitaire in the smoking room claimed Yeager.

Blythe and I were tramping the deck while we smoked.

"Notice anything peculiar about the men to-day and yesterday, Jack?" he asked in a low voice.

We were for the moment leaning against the rail, our eyes on the phosphorescent light that gleamed on the waves.

"No-o. Can't say that I have. Why?"

He smiled.

"Thought perhaps you hadn't. When man's engaged——"

"What!" I interrupted.

"——engaged in teaching a pretty girl how to steer, he doesn't notice little things he otherwise might."

"Such as——" I suggested.

He looked around to make sure we were alone.

"There's something in the wind. I don't know what it is."

"Something to do with the crew?"

"Yes. They know something about the reason why we're making this trip. You haven't talked, of course?"

"No."

"Nor Miss Wallace? Perhaps her aunt——"

"It doesn't seem likely. Whom would she talk to?"

"Some of the men may have overheard a sentence or two. The point is that they are talking treasure in the f'c'sle. Morgan got it from Higgins."

"From the cook?"

"Yes. Afterward the man was sorry he had spoken. He's the type that can't keep a secret. Some of it is bound to leak out in his talk."

"Couldn't Morgan find out where Higgins learned what he knows?"

"No. I had him try. The man was frightened about what he had already said. He wouldn't say another word. That doesn't look well."

After a moment of reflection I spoke.

"Perhaps Bothwell may have told some of the men before we started. I saw him talking to a man that looked like our chief engineer."

"When was that?"

I told in detail about my meeting with Bothwell on the wharf. Of course I had mentioned the occurrence at the time, but without referring to Fleming.

"Yes, he may have told Fleming about it, but——"

The uncompleted sentence suggested his doubt.

"You think he isn't the man to give away anything without a good reason?"

"You've said it."

"Of course it's really no business of the crew what we are going after."

"True enough, but we agreed among ourselves to tell them at the last moment and in such a way as to enlist them as partners with us. Unless I guess wrong, their feeling is sullenness. They think we're after booty in which they have no share."

"They'll feel all the kinder to us when we let them know that a percentage of our profits is to go to the crew."

"Will they? I wonder."

He was plainly disturbed, more so than I could find any justification for in the meager facts and surmises he had just confided to me.

"What is troubling you? What are you afraid of?"

"I can't put a name to my feeling, but I jolly well wish they didn't know. Seamen are a rough lot and they get queer ideas."

"You don't imagine for an instant that they'll maroon us and hoist the Jolly Roger, do you?" I asked with a laugh.

He did not echo my laugh.

"No, but I don't like it. I thought we had the

game in our own hands, and now I find the crew has notions, too."

"Don't you think you're rather overemphasizing the matter, Sam?"

"Perhaps I am." He appeared to shake off his doubts. "In fact, I'm pretty sure I am. But I thought it best to mention the thing to you."

"Glad you did. We'll keep an eye open and, if there's any trouble, nip it in the bud."

This was easy enough to say, but the event proved far otherwise. Within twenty-four hours we were to learn that serious trouble was afoot.

It was midday of a Saturday, and the sky was clear and cloudless as those which had gone before. During the forenoon we had been doing a steady fifteen knots, but there had been some slight trouble with the engines and we were now making way with the sails alone while the engineers overhauled the machinery.

Yeager and I were standing near the cook's scuppers fishing for shark with fat pork for bait. More than once I had caught the flash of a white-bellied monster, but Mr. Shark was wary about taking chances.

Dugan, our carpenter, stopped as he was passing, apparently to watch us. Glancing at him I noticed something in his face that held my eyes.

"There's trouble afoot, Mr. Sedgwick," he broke out in a low, jerky voice. "For God's sake, make a chance for me to talk to you or Captain Blythe!"

The cook came out of his galley at that moment. My wooden face told no tales.

"No chance. The beggar's too shy. I've had enough. How about you, Yeager?"

"Me to," the Arizonian laughed easily, and he hauled up the line.

I strolled forward to the pilot house, stopping to chat for an instant with Miss Berry, who lay in a steamer chair under the awning. For I had no intention of letting the men suspect that Dugan had told me anything of importance.

Blythe was at the wheel. I told him what Dugan had said. Our captain did not turn a hair.

"There's a shingle loose on the edge of the roof. Call Dugan to nail it tight."

The carpenter brought a hammer and nails. Tom Yeager meanwhile was sitting on a coil of rope talking to Caine. His laughter rippled up to us care-free as that of a schoolboy. He never even glanced our way, but I knew he would be ready when we needed him.

The captain turned the wheel over to me and stepped outside of the wheelhouse. Three or four of the men were lounging about the deck. So far

as they could see, Blythe was directing the carpenter about the work and the latter was explaining how it could be best done.

"Keep cool, my man. Don't let them guess what you are saying," the Englishman advised, lighting a cigar.

"What have you to tell me?"

"Mutiny, sir. That's what it is. We're after treasure. That's the story I've heard, and the men mean to take the ship."

I thought of Evelyn and her aunt, and my heart sank.

Sam stretched his arms and yawned.

"When?"

"Don't know, sir. I've picked up only a little here and there. Caine came to me this morning and asked me if I would go in with them."

Dugan drove two nails into the shingle.

"Do you know which of the men are stanch?"

"No, sir. Can't say as I do, outside of Alderson. Tom's all right."

"What about arms?"

"They have plenty. They've been packed in a bulkhead, but Fleming and Caine gave them out to the men this morning."

"The deuce! That looks ugly. They must be getting ready for business soon. If Caine ap-

proaches you again, fall in with his plans. Find out all you can, especially what men we can rely on. That will do."

"Yes, sir."

As soon as the man had gone the captain turned to me with a fighting gleam in his quiet eyes.

"Well, Jack, it's worse by a devilish lot than I had thought. We're in for mutiny. I wouldn't ask for anything better than a turn with these wharf rats if it weren't for the ladies. But with them aboard it's different. Wish I knew when Mr. Caine intends to set the match to the powder."

"What's the matter with my going down into the men's quarters and having a look around? I might stumble on some information worth while."

He shook his head.

"No, thanks. I need my second officer. If he went down there an accident might happen to him—due to a fall down the stairway or something of the sort."

"Then let me send Jimmie. Nobody would pay any attention to him. He could go into their quarters without suspicion."

"It would be safe enough for him at present. Why not? Don't tell him too much, Jack."

"Trust me."

Jimmie jumped at the chance to go sleuthing

again. I had told him a yarn about suspecting some of the men had whisky concealed in the ship. He was away less than half an hour, but when he came back it was with a piece of news most alarming.

"Mr. Sedgwick," he gasped, "you remember that big, black-faced guy you set me trailing in 'Frisco—Captain what's-his-name—well, he's on this ship sure as I'm a foot high!"

My heart lost a beat. "Certain of that, Jimmie?"

"Yep, it's a lead-pipe cinch. Saw him in the engine room talking to Mr. Fleming. When he seen me Mr. Fleming called me to come down. But not for Jimmie. He took a swift hike up the stairs."

The boy was all excitement. For that matter so was I, though I concealed it better. If Bothwell were on board the ship as a stowaway the aspect of affairs was more serious even than we had thought.

"You're sure it was Captain Bothwell, Jimmie?"

"Say, would I know me own mother? Would I know Jim Jeffries or Battling Nelson if I got an eyeful of them walking down Market Street? Would I be sure of the Chronicle Building if I set my peepers on it? Betcherlife."

"How was he dressed?"

"In sailors' slops. Didn't have on any coat. Wasn't right sure of him at first, 'cause he's run a lawn mower over them whiskers of his. But this guy's the original Bothwell all right, all right."

"Jimmie, listen to me. Don't whisper a word of this. Do you hear?"

"I'm a clam."

"And don't go exploring in that end of the ship again. Captain Bothwell would as soon wring your neck as a chicken's, my boy. Keep away from the forecastle."

Immediately I joined Blythe on the bridge and told him what Jimmie had discovered.

The captain nodded.

"That explains what was puzzling us. Bothwell has been too shrewd for us. He must have arranged it to throw his men in our way when we were selecting a crew. The scoundrel is laughing in his sleeve at us because we're taking him and his men at our expense to the treasure."

"He's diddled us beautifully," I admitted with a sour grin.

"I grant him one round. The man is dangerous as a wild beast that has escaped from its cage. But we're warned now. If he bests us it's our own fault."

"It will be a finish fight, no surrender and no quarter."

My friend nodded, his jaw gripped tight.

"You've said it."

"We've one advantage. All of us will stand together. He can't hold his riffraff long. They will quarrel among themselves. Every day that passes works in our favor."

"Right enough, but Bothwell knows this as well as we do. He'll move soon. We've forced his hand by discovering his presence. Now he can't let us get into port because he knows we would get help against him."

"That's true."

"Unless I guess wrong we'll hear from him inside of twenty-four hours."

"Since it has to be, the sooner the better."

Blythe shrugged his broad, lean shoulders coolly.

"What must be must. As for Captain Bothwell, I don't think he'll have an easy time of it. If he doesn't like the treatment he's going to get he'll have nobody to blame but himself. Nobody asked him on board."

"We must lose no time in making preparations to meet an attack."

"You're right. Tell Mr. Mott I wish to see him. Have Yeager look our weapons over and make sure

that they are loaded. Tell him to guard the armory until further notice. Better give Morgan a revolver at once and slip Dugan one if you can."

The flinty resolution in his eye warmed my heart. Man for man, I was ready to back Blythe against Bothwell.

The Scotch-Russian had more of the devil in him, a starker cruelty, a more blazing passion, and perhaps greater cunning; but if I read the Englishman aright there was in him that same quiet force which carried Captain Scott to the south pole and afterward gave to the world that immortal letter written in a bleak Antarctic waste of icy death.

Sam Blythe would play the game out steadily to a fighting finish.

CHAPTER XI

TAKING STOCK

Yeager was sitting with the ladies under the awning telling them some story of his beloved Arizona. At a signal from me he arose and excused himself. We passed into the reception room and down the stairway.

"You're armed, of course," I said.

"Me? I always pack a gun. Got the habit when I was a kid and never shucked it. For rattlesnakes," he added with a grin.

"We have a few of them on board. Yeager, the kid saw Bothwell in the engine room talking with Fleming. Do you know what that means?"

"I can guess, I reckon," he drawled.

"It means war—and soon."

"And war is hell, Sherman said. Let's make it hell for Bothwell. It's about time for me to begin earning my passage. What's the matter with me happening down into the forecastle and inviting Capt. Bothwell up to be more sociable?"

"Won't do at all. If he were alone it would be

a different matter. If you went down there you'd never come up alive. We need every man we've got. Think of the women."

His light-blue eye rested in mine.

"I'd give twenty cows if they were back in Los Angeles, Jack."

From my pocket I took the key which unlocked the door of the room we called the armory. After I had selected two revolvers I left him there attending to business. Morgan I found in Blythe's cabin. He took my news quietly enough, though he lost color when I told him what we had to expect.

"I don't know much about revolvers, sir," he said, handling very respectfully the one I handed him.

"You'll know more in a day or two," I promised. "Morgan, we're going to beat these scoundrels. Be quite sure of that."

"Yes, sir. Glad to hear it, sir," he answered doubtfully.

"You know Captain Blythe. He's worth half a dozen of these wharf rats. So is Mr. Yeager."

"Are—are all the crew against us?" he asked after a moment's struggle with his trepidation.

"No, we know of at least two who are for us. Probably there are others. Don't be afraid. We're going to smash this mutiny."

"Yes, sir. Captain Blythe will see to that. I put my faith in him."

But in spite of what I had said it was plain that Morgan's faith was a quavering one. He was a useful man, competent in his own line, but his *métier* plainly was not fighting. My news had given him a shock from which he would not quickly recover.

It was nearly time for the change of watches, and when I returned to the deck I saw that Mott was already on the bridge. He listened to our story with plain incredulity.

"I know nothing about this man Bothwell, but say the word and I'll go down and haul him on deck for you, Captain Blythe," he offered, contemptuously.

"You don't understand the situation. He's as dangerous as a mad dog."

"I've yet to see the first stowaway I couldn't bring to time. They're a chicken-hearted lot, take my word for it."

"He isn't a stowaway at all in the ordinary sense of the word. I'll be plain, Mr. Mott We're after treasure, and Bothwell means to get it. The crew are with him."

"Slap doodle bugs!" retorted our first officer. "I make nothing at all of your story, captain.

Thirty years I've sailed this coast and I've yet to see my first mutiny. Haul up this fellow Bothwell and set him swabbing decks. If he shows his teeth, give him a rope's end or a marlinspike. I'll haze him for you a-plenty."

I could have smiled at Mott's utter lack of appreciation of our dilemma if his bull-headed obstinacy had not been likely to cost us so much.

"You don't understand the man with whom we have to deal, Mr. Mott. He sticks at nothing," I explained.

"Beg pardon, Mr. Sedgwick. He'd stick at deck swabbing if I stood over him with a handspike," the burly mate answered grimly. "Truth is, gentlemen, I don't think that of your mutiny." And he snapped his fingers with a complacent laugh. "Mind you, I don't deny the men are a bit unsettled, what with all this talk of treasure that's going around. What they need is roughing and, by the jumping mercury, Johnny Mott is the man to do it!"

There are none so blind as those who will not see. We could not even persuade Mott to accept a revolver. He had made up his mind that the whole thing was nothing more or less than a mare's nest.

"What do you know of the men?" I urged. "Take our engineers. We picked up the Flemings

on the wharf because we needed engineers in a hurry. The day before we sailed I saw George Fleming on the wharf talking to this man Bothwell. They are working together against us."

"What of it? Let them work. But don't go to dreaming about mutiny, Mr. Sedgwick. You ask what I know of the crew. By your leave, I know this much. I've bullied American seamen for thirty years come next November, and there's not an ounce of mutiny in a million of them."

And at that we had to let it go for the present. There were more important things on hand than the conversion of a wooden-headed tar.

Leaving Mott at the wheel we adjourned to the deck saloon for a discussion of ways and means. Miss Wallace sauntered in with a magazine in her hand.

The captain's eye questioned mine. I nodded. She would have to learn soon how things stood, and I trusted to her courage to hear the news without any fainting or hysterics. The color washed out of her face, but she showed not the least sign of panic.

"What can I do?" she asked in a steady voice.

"At present you may join an officers' council, Miss Wallace," said he. "The first thing to find out is who are for us and who against. Let's take

the enemy first. There is Bothwell himself to begin with, and, of course, the two Flemings and Caine. Are we sure of any others?"

"Johnson," I replied at once. "He was one of the two men who attacked me at San Pedro. I thought at the time one of the voices sounded familiar, but I couldn't place it. After I reached the boat I noticed Caine watching me closely. The reason is clear enough to me now. He and Johnson slugged me, and he was watching to see if I had any suspicion of him."

"Sure, Jack?"

"Quite. I couldn't swear to them, but I'm morally certain. Johnson's English is just a little broken. It was his voice I knew."

"That makes five against us so far. We can add the firemen to that, since George Fleming chose them."

"Eight to begin with. What about the rest of the crew?"

"The man they call Tot Dennis was signed for me by Caine. Afraid we'll have to give him to the enemy."

"Williams is a great friend of Dennis. I've seen them together a lot," Evelyn suggested.

"That's true, but Williams has sailed with me

twice before. I did think I could have trusted him."

"No doubt Caine and Bothwell have been influencing him. Put Williams down doubtful."

We checked off the rest of the crew by name, but could find no evidence against any of them.

"How many can we depend upon?" Evelyn asked.

"Yeager, Mott, Morgan, Jack here, and myself. That's five to begin with," counted Blythe.

"Dugan and Alderson," I added.

"Seven. Any more?"

"Our steward. Phillips is his name."

"Sure, Miss Wallace?"

"He's the most harmless creature on earth."

The captain smiled.

"Afraid he won't be of much use to us then. We want harmful men. But count him. That makes eight for us, nine against us, six doubtful. We'll do very nicely."

"And there's the cook. He's so fat and good-natured he must be all right," Evelyn suggested.

"By Jove! I'd forgotten 'Arry 'Iggins. No, he's against us. He talked to my man Morgan."

"And I suppose his flunky, Billie Blue, goes with cookie?" I added.

"The nine against us is now eleven," the girl said quietly.

I spoke cheerfully, which is far from how I felt.

"Oh, well, what's the odds? Nine or eleven, we'll beat them."

A steamer rug lying on a lounge at the end of the room heaved itself up. From its folds emerged the red head of Jimmie, belligerently. Its owner had evidently been roused from a nap.

"Where do I get off at I'd like to know?" demanded the indignant namesake of a martyred President. "Didn't I run down his nibs for you in 'Frisco and wise you where he was staying? Didn't I find out he was aboard here? Why ain't you countin' me in?"

Blythe assented gravely, but with a twinkle in his eye.

"Our error, Jimmie. Counting you we have nine good men and true."

"One of Jimmie's strong points is that he doesn't talk. He knows how to keep his mouth shut. Don't you, Jimmie?"

"Sure thing, Mr. Sedgwick. I'm a clam, I am."

I nodded.

"Then run along and keep an eye on things outside. If you see anything suspicious, let me know at once."

"Yes, sir. You bet you." And the boy was off at the word.

"Couldn't we put back to San Diego?" Miss Wallace asked.

The captain shook his head.

"No. If I turned the ship's head they would be about our ears like rats."

"We'll have to keep on as we are going."

A sardonic smile touched Blythe's strong, lean face.

"It's Mr. Bothwell's move. If we turned back he would have to stop us; if we continue to Panama he must prevent us from going into the harbor, or his game is up."

"Then what will he do?"

"He'll move, Miss Wallace."

She looked at him, a man of quiet, contained strength, and some sort of vision of what we were to go through flitted before her mind. Her lips were gray and bloodless.

"That dreadful treasure!" she murmured. "Why did we ever come after it?"

A faint sound drew me to my feet and across the room to the stairway. A fat bulk of a man was crouched on the steps about half-way down. He scuttled to his feet at sight of me.

"Good afternoon, Higgins! Just taking a nap

on the stairs, I presume," was my ironical greeting.

The color faded from his blotched face.

"No, sir, not as you might say——" He moistened his dry lips with the tip of his tongue and tried again. "Truth is, sir, Hi wanted to ask Miss Wallace what she would like for dinner."

"That's very considerate of you. And I'm sure it's the truth. You were merely resting on the way. Come on up, Higgins. That is, if you're now able to finish the journey. Or shall I help you?"

The tail of his eye had swung round to take in the lower deck. I could have sworn the man was considering making a bolt for it, but at my words he gave up the idea with a fat sigh. He came up slowly, his eyes fixed on mine as if I held them fascinated. Tiny beads of sweat stood out on his forehead. 'Arry 'Iggins was not at that moment comfortable in his mind.

"Hi strive to please, sir," he explained. "Whatever the young lady would like. Hin a manner of speakin' I'm 'er 'umble servant, very respectably, 'Arry 'Iggins."

He ducked his head toward her and again toward Blythe.

"Come here," the captain ordered.

Higgins shuffled reluctantly forward.

"When did you first meet this man Bothwell?"

"Beg pardon, sir. Don't think I know the gent, sir."

The Englishman's eyes pierced into his fellow-countryman like a drill.

"Don't lie to me."

The cook had recourse to a large bandanna handkerchief to mop away his perspiration.

"If you mean the stowaway, sir, Hi met 'im just before we reached Los Angeles."

"How many of the crew are with him in this mutiny?"

"Mutiny, sir?"

"I don't mince words. How many?"

"There you 'ave me, sir. S'elp me, Captain Blythe, Hi'm not in 'is confidence."

The man's painful assumption of innocence would have been pathetic had it not been ridiculous.

"I know that," retorted my friend contemptuously. "He'll use you and chuck you aside, dead or alive, whichever is most convenient. Bothwell would as soon knife his fat friend as wink. But that's not the point just now. You'll—tell—me—all—you—know—about—this—affair — at — once. Understand?"

Higgins wriggled like a trout on the hook, but he had to tell what he knew. In point of fact this

was not much more than we had already learned.

"You will go back to Bothwell and tell him to start the band playing just as soon as he has his program arranged. Tell him we don't care a jackstraw for his mutiny, and that if he lives through it we'll take him in irons to Panama and have him hanged as high as Haman. Get that, my man?" demanded Blythe.

"Yes, sir. 'Anged as 'igh as 'Aman. Hi'll remember, sir."

Sam turned to me and spoke in a low voice.

"Before this fellow goes I want Mott to hear what he has said. Take Yeager up with you and relieve him. And see that Alderson gets a revolver."

I took our mate's place at the wheel and sent him forward. Tom Yeager leaned on the ship's rail and looked away across the glassy waters of the Pacific. I remember that he was humming, as was his fashion, a snatch from a musical comedy.

It was such a day as one dreams about, with that pleasant warmth in the air that makes for indolent content. One or two of the men were lounging lazily on the forecastle deck. Caine was reading a book of travels I had lent him the previous day.

Were we all, as Mott believed, the victims of a stupid nightmare? Or could it be true that beneath

all this peace boiled a volcano ready at any minute for an eruption?

Mott returned in an unpleasant mood. The truth is that he was nursing a grudge because he was the last man on board to know that we were on a cruise for treasure. He resented it that our party had not told him, and he took it with a bad grace that every man jack of the crew had been whispering for days about something of which he had been kept in the dark. Upon my word I think he had some just cause of complaint.

While he jeered at the precautions we were taking I tried to placate him, for now of all times we could least afford to have any quarrels in our party.

"You will admit there is no harm in going prepared, Mr. Mott?" I argued.

"To be sure. Ballast yourselves with revolvers, for all I care. I'll carry one because Captain Blythe has ordered it, but don't expect me to join in the play acting."

I felt myself flushing.

"The situation appears to us a very serious one."

"Slap doodle bugs! Let Captain Blythe give the word and I'll go down and bring up this bogey man, that is, if there is such a fellow aboard at all."

Presently I was called down to luncheon. I found Miss Wallace lingering with Blythe in the

dining-room. As soon as I arrived the captain left.

Philips waited on me. He had already heard the news, and was ashen. His hands trembled as he passed dishes so that I was sorry for him.

"He's badly frightened, poor man," the young woman whispered to me across the table during one of his absences. "I wish I could tell him that there will probably be no serious trouble."

Her eyes appealed to mine. I could see that with her aunt and poor Philips on her hands she was in for no easy time. But I could not lie to her.

"What do you think yourself? You know your cousin. Will he lie down and let us win without a fight?"

She shook her head slowly. "No. He'll go through with his villainy, no matter what it costs."

"Yes. There is no use blinking the facts. We're in for a test of strength. I'm sorry, but the only way to meet the situation is to accept it and be ready for it. I don't fear the result."

She looked steadily at me.

"Nor I. But it's dreadful to have to wait and hold our hands. I wish I could do something."

"You can," I smiled. "You may pass me the potatoes, and after I have finished eating you may play for us. We must show these scurvy ruffians that we aren't a bit afraid of them."

CHAPTER XII

MY UNEXPECTED GUEST

"And will they murder us all in our beds?"

Miss Berry, very white but not at all hysterical, had Blythe penned in a corner by the piano as she asked the question.

"Don't be a goose, auntie," her niece smiled affectionately.

"The fact is that we were afraid you might complain of ennui, so we have stirred up a little excitement," explained Sam.

"Truly, Mr. Blythe?"

My friend looked at me appealingly and I came to the rescue.

"Sailors are a queer lot. They often get notions that have to be knocked out of them. We'll try not to disturb you while we do the hammering, Miss Berry."

A faint color washed back into her face.

"Oh, I hope you are right. It would be dreadful if——" She interrupted herself to take a more

cheerful view. "But I am sure Mr. Mott is right. He has been on the seas a great many years more than you two. He ought to know best, oughtn't he?"

"Certainly," I conceded. "And I hope he does."

"Besides, Captain Bothwell is such a gentleman. I'm sure he wouldn't do anything so dreadful. I wish I could talk to him. He was always so reasonable with me, though Evie and he couldn't get along."

I concealed my smile at the thought of Miss Berry converting him.

The trumpet call to dinner diverted our thoughts. I dropped into my room to wash before dinner, with the surprising result that I lost the meal.

As I opened the door a low voice advised me to close it at once. Since I was looking into the wrong end of a revolver, and that weapon was in the hand of a very urgent person, I complied with the suggestion. The man behind the gun was Boris Bothwell.

"Hope I don't intrude," I apologized, glancing at the disorder in my stateroom.

The floor was littered with papers, coats, collars, ties, and underwear. Drawers had been dragged out and emptied, my trunk gutted of its contents. Evidently the captain had been engaged in a thor-

ough search of the cabin when my entrance diverted his attention.

"Not at all. I was hoping you would come," he answered pleasantly.

"Perhaps I should have knocked before entering, but then I didn't expect to find you here."

"I came on impulse," he explained. "I had reason to suppose you would be busy for an hour or two. By the way, Evie *is* entertaining. Did I ever mention to you that it is my intention to marry her?"

"I think not."

"Ah! Then I make a confidant of you now. Congratulate me, my friend."

"Is this an official announcement?" I asked.

"Hardly official, I think. The lady does not know it."

"Then I think I'll wait till the engagement gets her O. K."

"As you like, Mr. Sedgwick, but I assure you I am an irresistible lover."

"So I hear you say," I replied coldly. "Was it to tell me this that you have put me in debt to you for this call?"

"Hardly. To be frank, I came to get a map."

I sat down on the edge of the bed.

"Again?"

"As you say, again."

"Quite like old times, isn't it? I am reminded of our 'Frisco Nights' Entertainment. The search for a map in other people's apartments is becoming rather a habit with you, isn't it?"

"I'm a persistent beggar," he admitted.

"I regret we have no more copies to lend."

He laughed indulgently.

"*Touché, monsieur.* But I don't care for copies. I am a collector of originals."

"They are said to be expensive."

"But valuable."

"Still, the cost is a consideration."

"Not when some one else pays the shot, Mr. Sedgwick."

"I see. You expect those poor devils whom you are misleading to draw the chestnut out of the fire for you."

"Exactly," he admitted with the gayest aplomb.

"You are willing that they should pay to the limit?" I asked, curious to see how far his cynical audacity would carry him.

He shrugged, with a lift of his strong hands.

"That is as luck, or fate, or Providence—whichever you believe in, Mr. Sedgwick—deals out the cards. I'm not a god, you know."

"You know that you cannot follow the course outlined without lives being lost," I persisted.

"I'll take your word for it," he flung back lightly.

"That won't deter you in the least?"

"Wasn't it Napoleon who said one couldn't make an omelet without breaking eggs?"

"And yet his omelet was not a success," I reflected aloud.

"Whose is, Mr. Sedgwick? We all have our Waterloos. Love, ambition, the search for wealth —none of them satisfy. But though none of us find happiness we yet seek. That is human nature."

I shot a question at him abruptly.

"Suppose you got all this treasure—would you keep faith with those poor, deluded ruffians and share with them?"

His hardy smile approved me.

"You're deep, my friend. Now I wonder what I would do? My tools *are* deluded. Wealth could not bring them the happiness they think it would. Most of them it would ruin. I fear it would be my duty to——"

"——let them hold the sack," I finished for him.

"Precisely."

"There is, then, no honor among thieves."

"Not a bit. No more than there is among gen-

tlemen. But since you object to having eggs broken, I offer you an alternative."

I waited.

"In order to save eggs I'll ask you to turn over to me the map."

"Where do you think I keep it? You've already searched my rooms and my person. I'm no wizard."

His black eyes bored into mine.

"We've been over this ground once before, Mr. Sedgwick. You know me. I'm here for business."

"So I judge."

"Come! This won't do. I'm a determined man. That map I'm going to have. Unless you want the scene to close with the final exit of John Sedgwick, find for me the map."

"Suppose I tell you that I haven't it?"

"I shall believe you, since the evidence would support the assertion. I should then ask who has it?"

"You certainly are a man of one idea. I think I've never had the pleasure of talking with you that you didn't switch the conversation back to that map."

He raised the revolver.

"I asked a question."

There was a step outside, followed by a knock on the door. "Come in," I sang out instantly.

Bothwell's furious gaze came back from the door just as I leaped. A bullet crashed through the skylight, for my arm had deflected his. I wrapped myself about him in silent struggle for the weapon. We swayed against the bed and went down upon it hard, our weight tearing through the springs. Desperately I clung to his arm to keep the weapon from pointing at me.

"Let go, Sedgwick," a voice ordered.

Sinewy fingers had tightened on Bothwell's throat and a strong hand had wrenched the revolver from him.

Panting, I struggled to my feet. My opportune friend covered the Russian with his own weapon and drawled out a warning.

"Don't you now, Mr. Pirate, or I'll certainly have to load you up with lead."

Bothwell lay on the bed, his breast heaving from his exertions. In no man's looks have I ever seen a more furious malice, but he had sense enough to recognize that this was our moment.

"If it ain't butting in, what were you gentlemen milling around so active about this warm day?" asked Yeager.

"Same old point of difference. Captain Bothwell wanted a map."

Tom laughed gently.

"Sho! You hadn't ought to be so blamed urgent, cap. It don't buy you anything."

The Russian struggled with his rage, fought it down, and again found his ironic smile.

"I am under the impression that it would have bought me a map if it had not been for your arrival, sir."

"Too bad I spoiled yore game, then."

"For the present," amended the defeated man. "I am a person of much resource, Mr. Sedgwick will tell you." Then, with a glance at the bit of plaster on my head: "He still wears a souvenir to remind him of it."

"My little adventure at San Pedro. I always credited you with that, captain. Thanks."

"You're entirely welcome. More to follow," he smiled.

"What are you allowing to do with your guest, Sedgwick?" asked Yeager.

"We'll leave that to Blythe. I suppose we had better put him in irons and guard him. We can drop him off at Panama."

"Any port in a time of storm," suggested our prisoner blithely.

"Personally, I'd like to see you marooned for a few months," I growled, for the man's insolence ruffled me.

I found Blythe on the bridge with Mott.

"I have to report a prisoner of war captured, captain," I announced in formal military style.

Blythe laughed.

"Who is he?"

"Captain Boris Bothwell, sir."

"What!"

I told him and Mott the circumstances. The mate unbent a little.

"And the lubber shot at you? In your own cabin! Put him in irons and throw him ashore at Panama. That's my advice, Mr. Blythe. Get rid of him, and you'll not hear any more about this mutiny business."

"I'm of that opinion myself, Mr. Mott. We'll keep him under guard until he's in safe custody."

Blythe followed me down to my cabin, and for the first time he and Bothwell looked each other over.

"This isn't a passenger ship, sir," announced the owner of the *Argos* bluntly. "You've made a mistake, sir. We'll hand you over to the authorities at Panama."

Bothwell bowed.

"Dee-lighted! I've always wanted to see the old city of Pizarro, Drake and Morgan. Many a galleon has been looted of ingots and bullion by the

old seadogs there. If I weren't so conscientious, by Jupiter, I'd turn pirate myself."

"Haven't a doubt of it," Blythe assented curtly. "We'll try to see that your opportunities don't match your inclinations. Unless I guess wrong you wouldn't hesitate to cut a throat to escape if your hands were free."

"Not at all."

"Just so. Merely as a formality we'll take the precaution of making sure you haven't any weapons that might go off and injure you—or anybody else. Jack, may I trouble you to look in my cabin for a pair of handcuffs—middle right hand drawer of my dressing table?"

We made our prisoner secure and spelled each other watching him. The first three hours fell to me. Except the Arizonian I think all of us felt a weight lifted from our hearts. The chief villain was in our hands and the mutiny nipped in the bud.

But Bothwell had managed to inject a fly into the ointment of my content.

"We've drawn your sting now," Blythe had told him before he left.

"Have you? Bet you a pony I'll be free inside of twenty-four hours," the Russian had coolly answered.

CHAPTER XIII

MUTINY

It was in the afternoon of the day after our encounter with Bothwell—to be more accurate, just after four bells. Miss Wallace and I were sitting under the deck awning, she working in a desultory fashion upon a piece of embroidery while I watched her lazily.

The languorous day was of the loveliest. It invited to idleness, made repudiation of work a virtue. My stint was over for a few hours at least and I enjoyed the luxury of pitying poor Mott, who was shut up in a stuffy cabin with our prisoner.

Yeager, too, was off duty. We could hear him pounding away at the piano in the saloon. Ragtime floated to us, and presently a snatch from "The Sultan of Sulu."

Since I first met you,
Since I first met you,
The open sky above me seems a deeper blue,
Golden, rippling sunshine warms me through and through,
Each flower has a new perfume since I first met you.

"T. Yeager is a born optimist," I commented idly. "Life is one long, glorious lark to him. I believe he would be happy if he knew raw, red mutiny were going to break out in twenty minutes."

"He's very likable. I never knew a man who has had so many experiences. There's something right boyish about him."

"Even if he could give me about a dozen years."

"Years don't count with his kind. He's so full of life, so fresh and yet so wise."

"His music isn't fresh anyhow. I move we go stop it."

"Thank you, I'm very comfortable here. I don't second the motion," she declined.

"Motion withdrawn. But I'm going to tempt him from that piano just the same. Jimmie, come here. Run down to the music-room and tell Mr. Yeager that Miss Wallace would like to see him."

Evelyn laughed.

"I think you're real mean, Mr. Sedgwick."

"For saving the life of your musical soul?"

"He *is* pretty bad," she admitted.

He was on the chorus again, his raucous exuberant voice riding it like one of his own bucking broncos.

Golden, rippling sunshine warms me through and through,
Each flower has a new perfume since I first met you.

"Bad. He's the worst ever. Thank Heaven, we've got him stopped! There he comes with Jimmie."

He moved across the deck toward us with that little roll usually peculiar to dismounted horsemen of the plains.

"I *do* like him," the young woman murmured. "He's so strong and gentle and good-natured. I don't suppose he could get mad."

"Oh, couldn't he? I'll ask him about that."

"Now I *do* think you're mean," she reproached with a flash of her eyes.

"You sent for me, Miss Wallace? Was it to throw him overboard because he's mean?" Yeager asked genially.

Her eye was sparkling and her lips open for an answer, but the words were never spoken. For at that instant a man burst past us with blood streaming down his face from a ghastly cut in the forehead. He was making for the bridge.

"It's come," I said, rising and drawing my revolver.

"I must go to Auntie," Evelyn said, very white about the lips.

"Not now. She's perfectly safe. They won't trouble her till they have won the ship."

"And there will be some merry times before then, I expect," said Tom, his hand on the butt of a revolver and his vigilant eye sweeping the deck.

We were hurrying forward to the wheel-house. Every moment I expected to see a rush of men tearing up the companionway, but all seemed quiet and orderly. The hands on deck either had not noticed Dugan, or else were awaiting developments.

"'Twas Caine did it, sir," Dugan explained to Blythe. "I was lying in my bunk when he came down with the stowaway you were holding prisoner."

"With Bothwell?" I cried.

"Yes, sir. They asked me to join them in taking the ship. They put it plain they meant to get the treasure."

"Do you know which of the men is with them?" I asked.

"No, sir. Soon as I got the drift of what they were at I let Caine have my fist in his dirty mouth. He came at me with a cutlas. I got this cut before I could break away. Gallagher tried to head me, but I bowled him over."

"Do you know how Bothwell escaped?"

"Caine helped him. I heard Tot Dennis say that Mr. Mott had got his. That was just before they spoke to me."

Evelyn sat down quickly. I think she wanted to faint. She too understood what was meant by the words that Mott had "got his."

"What about Alderson? Are you sure he can be trusted?" Blythe asked of the sailor.

"Yes, sir. I can speak for him and for Smith."

Alderson was on deck and I called him to us. He was a clean-cut seamanly fellow of about thirty. His blue eyes were frank and self-reliant.

"My man, there's mutiny aboard. That's the short of it. Are you for us or against us?"

"I'm for you, sir."

"Good. We're going to beat the scoundrels, but there is going to be fighting."

"Yes, sir."

"Bully for you!" cried Yeager, and slapped him on the back. "Can you shoot?"

"Not especially well, sir."

"Listen to me," ordered Blythe. "Our aim must be to hold the wheelhouse and the cabins. Mr. Sedgwick, you will take Miss Wallace back to the staterooms and rally the rest of our forces. Mr. Mott is done for, I am afraid, but the rest of our friends are probably all right. Arm all of them.

Get the rifles out. Better nail up the windows and lock the doors after you are in. Alderson and Dugan will go with you. You, too, Jimmie. Yeager, you are the best shot. I'll have you stay with me."

"Hadn't you better join us and give up the wheelhouse for the present?"

The Englishman's eyes flashed.

"Surrender my ship to that scum! I'm surprised at you, Jack."

"I'm not surprised at you," I grinned. "I meant only until we have beaten them."

"What about the rest of the crew who are for us?" Miss Wallace asked.

"We'll have to give them time to declare themselves."

We obeyed orders at once, Alderson supporting Dugan, who was growing weak from loss of blood. As we went to the reception room I caught sight of Tot Dennis, his hatchet face peering above the companionway at the end of the bridge deck. At sight of me his head disappeared hastily. But he had given me an idea. I hung back while the rest of our party passed into the saloon, then walked forward quickly and descended to the lower deck.

A little group of men were gathered at the hatchway leading to the forecastle. I stepped briskly toward them, though Johnson's revolver was cover-

ing me. I'll admit I took a chance, but it was a calculated one. If Caine or Bothwell had been with them I would not have dared so far, but I reckoned that their mental habits as seamen were still strong enough to keep them from shooting an officer.

"You poor devils, Dennis, Johnson and Mack! Do you know what this means? It spells hanging for every mother's son of you. Don't be a madman and fire that gun, Johnson. There's still a chance, even for you. Cut loose from the pirate you're serving and join the honest party. Mack, you're not a mutineer, are you? You don't want to be hanged at the yardarm, do you?"

The group at the stairway had become four instead of three.

"Avast there, Mr. Sedgwick. Get back or I'll fire," growled Caine.

"I'm not speaking to you, Caine. Your bacon is cooked. I'm making my offer to the others. I've got no time to wait, my men. Are you coming?"

A bullet from Caine's revolver whistled past my ear. I stayed no longer, but fell back to the stairs and took to my heels. A bullet chipped away a splinter of wood beside me as I ran.

I found Dugan stretched on one of the long saloon seats, already being ministered to by Morgan and Evelyn. Alderson had locked one door and

was on guard at the other, cutlas and revolver in hand.

"Well done, Alderson. That's the way to keep a lookout," I sang out cheerfully.

"Thank you, sir. Were you hit? That was risky, sir, talking to them without cover."

"They can't hit a barn door," I answered with a laugh.

I had moved over to the hospital corps and was looking down at the wounded man.

"Is he badly hurt?" I asked.

Evelyn looked at me with an expression I did not understand.

"I don't think so. You mustn't do that again, Mr. Sedgwick. It isn't right to take unnecessary risks." Her voice was a little tense and strained.

We heard the sound of a shot and presently of slapping footsteps.

"Let me in," called a panting voice.

Alderson turned to me.

"It's Williams, sir. Shall I let him in?"

"Yes."

There came the crack of a rifle. Simultaneously Williams burst in on us.

"They're shooting at me, sir. I watched my chance to follow you."

"You're an honest man?" I asked sharply.

"Of course I am, sir. Couldn't say so with all of them around me."

"Good." I gave Jimmie the key of our armory. "Take Williams down and let him choose a revolver and a cutlas."

I would have gone with him myself, but at that moment a voice had hailed the captain. Stepping from the saloon I saw Bothwell with a white handkerchief at the head of the stairway leading from the main deck.

"Envoy to former Captain Blythe from the crew," I heard him say.

Crisp and clear sang the answer of our captain.

"My man, I don't know you. If my crew have anything to say let them send one of their own number. I don't deal with stowaways scalawags."

"You'll deal with me if you deal with them. I've been elected captain in place of Mr. Blythe, deposed."

"The devil you have! Bite on this, my man. I own this boat, every stick and ribbon of her. I'm going to be master here. If the men want to talk I'll name conditions. Let them bring you and Caine up here in irons and put their arms down on the deck. That will be a preliminary to any talk between me and them."

"You speak large, Mr. Blythe."

"*Captain* Blythe, my man, and don't you forget it! Now tramp. Get back to your ruffians or I'll put a bullet through you."

"Would you fire on a flag of truce?"

"I recognize no flag of truce in your hands. Look lively."

"I've only got to say that I'll take pleasure in settling your hash for this," Bothwell cried angrily.

"I'm not Mr. Mott. You'll not find it so easy to murder me. Move!"

Bothwell disappeared with a curse. I retired into the saloon.

Evelyn was standing near the door with a face in which I could read both anxiety and anger.

"Why do you expose yourself like that?" she cried.

"I wanted to see what was going on."

"You'll be shot. Then what shall we do?"

"There's not much danger yet, and I must keep in touch with our friends forward. Don't you think we had better get your patient to bed?"

"I'm all right, sir," Dugan spoke up faintly.

"He ought to be kept quiet for a day or two," his young nurse decided.

"I'll take him down to my cabin. Perhaps you

can get him something to put him to sleep, Miss Wallace."

Miss Berry came up the stairs just as we were starting down. She looked like a ghost.

"Mr. Sedgwick, I've just been wakened from a nap. I heard some one groaning in the cabin next to mine." She caught sight of Dugan's bandaged head and cried out: "What's the matter? Has something happened?"

"Don't be frightened, Miss Berry."

"What are these men doing with pistols? Where does that blood come from?"

Evelyn came forward and took her aunt in her arms.

"Dearie, we can trust Captain Blythe and Mr. Sedgwick. We mustn't make it harder for them. Just now they are very busy."

I looked my thanks.

Williams and Jimmie returned from the armory. Morgan and Philips were at their heels. The steward looked very yellow.

"Let me know if there is any sign of trouble. I'll be back presently," I told Alderson.

Having put Dugan to bed in my room, I stepped into the one where we had been keeping our prisoner. Mott lay on the floor, his body still warm, quite dead. I judged that he had expired within

the past few minutes. He had been struck with some blunt instrument and then knifed. The man had paid for his obstinate disbelief with his life.

I lifted the body to the bed, locked the door, and returned to the promenade deck saloon. For the throb of the propeller had ceased. An immediate attack was probably impending.

Miss Berry was sobbing softly in the arms of her niece. In my absence we had gained another adherent. Billie Blue, the cook's flunky, had come up from below.

"Where is Higgins?" I asked.

"Don't know, sir. He left right after lunch."

Alderson, who had been craning out of the door, drew back his head to speak.

"They're coming, sir."

"Down to your cabin, ladies. You go with them, Jimmie. Lock yourselves in," I ordered.

Evelyn's white lips tried to frame some words as she passed me. I understood what she wanted to say.

"I'll be careful," I promised.

"I have no weapon, sir," Billie Blue told me.

I had brought up with me from below a repeating rifle, so I handed him one of my revolvers and an Italian dirk that had been hanging on the wall as an ornament.

The second door I ordered locked. Putting my head out of one of the windows I counted the enemy as they stood grouped near the stairway from the main deck. Bothwell was in the lead, followed by Caine. At their heels trooped both engineers, the three firemen, the cook, Johnson, Mack, Gallagher, Dennis, Smith, and Neidlinger. It was not easy to count them, because they shifted to and fro, but I was almost sure they were fourteen. The boatswain carried in his hand a towel, which he was waving.

"Crew to have a conference with you, Cap'n Blythe," he called out.

"I hold no conference with armed mutineers," Blythe called back sternly.

He was standing in the wheelhouse, rifle in hand. Beside him was the curly head of Tom Yeager.

"This here ship's company offers to do the square thing, share and share alike, cap'n," boomed out the boatswain. "We wants a bit of that there treasure, and by Moses! we're going to have it. But we don't want no bloodshed, cap'n."

"Then get back to duty in a hurry, my man!"

George Fleming spoke up.

"Give us that map and we'll put your party ashore safe, sir."

"I'll see you hung up to dry at my yardarm

first! If you want the ship come and take it, you scurvy scoundrel!"

It looked like long odds—fourteen to two. I began to wonder if Bothwell had forgotten us, and I ordered Alderson to unlock the door for a sortie if one should be necessary.

Even while I was speaking the rush came. They divided like running water when it reaches a big rock in midstream. Some of them poured toward us, the rest made for the bridge. I heard the crack of Sam's rifle, the rattle of small arms, and then the battle was upon us.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BATTLE

I fired through the window and brought down one fellow while they were still coming in a huddle toward us. Before I could fire again they were in the saloon and at close quarters with us.

To me it seemed that a hundred men were struggling in that narrow, smoke-filled space. A grimy, blackfaced stoker leaped at me and I fired. I remember beating him over the head with my revolver and that we went down together in a clinch.

As I was falling it came over me that the attack was only a feint to keep us busy. The main body of the mutineers was storming the wheelhouse.

When I clambered to my feet I found that our attackers had been routed. Billie Blue's dirk had put a temporary quietus on my stoker, and the rest had fled as quickly as they had come.

"This way!" I shouted, and was out of the door in a jiffy.

A swarm of men were racing up the steps that

led to the bridge and the pilot house. One lay with arms outstretched, face down on the deck. Another was sliding down the rail of the steps, his face writhing with pain.

Our friends were hard pressed. Blythe was keeping the door against a mob, while Yeager was firing through the window. Twice I saw the captain's cutlas flash. Then I lost sight of him and I knew that Bothwell had forced the entrance.

At the same instant the Arizonian disappeared from the opening which he had been using as a porthole. I knew that Sam was down and that his friend had gone to his assistance. My flank attack must have come as a surprise. The mutineers turned, finding themselves between two fires. We crowded in on them, and for a time the jam was so thick that none of us could do much damage.

Now they fought as desperately to get out of the wheelhouse as they had a minute earlier to get in. They were in a panic of fear, fancying themselves trapped.

I was flung against Bothwell, his furious face so close to mine that the hot breath filled my nostrils. We tried to grip each other, but in the huddle we were thrust apart.

Suddenly the room was no longer full. I could see that the enemy was in flight. Before I reached

the open I knew that the day was won. Alderson, Billie Blue, and Morgan were pursuing the flying rabble.

Bothwell, making play with his cutlas against both Blythe and Yeager, was retreating slowly to the bridge rail. I remember crying out as I ran toward them.

Bothwell vaulted over the rail to the deck below. I followed like a fool, for in the row I had lost my weapons. As I recall it now, Sam shouted to me to come back. But there was some idiotic notion in my head that the Russian might run into the reception room with his fellows and get possession of the women.

Instead, he turned and slashed at me. The blow would have carved my head had not I dodged. At that I received a nasty swipe in the arm. It was not possible to stop. All I could do was to slip past him and continue running.

George Fleming had stopped at the head of the stairway to the main deck. He leveled a pistol and waited for me. Bothwell was at my heels. I was between the devil and the deep sea.

"We've got him!" the Russian cried.

I swung in behind one of the boats which lay under a tarpaulin near the edge of the deck. Simultaneously I heard the engineer's gun crack. No

rabbit could have clambered around the boat quicker than I. Bothwell had doubled back and was charging me. His whistling cutlas hissed down not an inch from my ear and ripped through the tarpaulin to bury the blade in the wood of the bow.

I scudded back toward the bridge, my enemy in full chase.

Every instant I expected to feel the slash of his blade between my shoulders. It seemed to me that my leaden feet clung to the planks, that a toddling child could do that stretch to safety quicker than I was doing it.

As I ran the deck began to tilt dizzily. Before my eyes there spread a haze. All grew black even while my feet still automatically moved.

"Badly hurt, old man?"

The voice came to me from a great distance. With returning consciousness I found that the strong arm of its owner was supporting my head and shoulders. My eyes looked into those of our captain.

"It's all right, Jack," he explained. "We got to you just as you fell and Tom drove that villain back. How badly cut are you?"

"A glancing cut, I think. But I'm a bit dizzy? We beat them, didn't we?"

"Yes. The rats have scuttled back to their holes."

He helped me into the reception room and I sank down on the lounge.

"Just a bit light-headed," I explained to Yeager, who came in at that moment.

"Glad it's no worse. We gave them a drubbing, anyhow."

"Get Bothwell?" asked Sam.

"Nope. My gun was empty. I had him at the foot of the ladder, not ten feet from the muzzle, and *click*—nothing doing. The beggar turned and laughed in my face."

"Keep a lookout, Alderson," the captain ordered, while he unbuttoned my coat. "Tom, you'd better take a look around and size up the damage."

"Mott is dead. I found his body in the cabin," I told our chief.

"I was afraid of it. With Mott gone and Dugan wounded we were short two men at the beginning of the scrimmage. Eight to fourteen—devilish long odds. Easy with that sleeve there. Here you, Billie Blue, get me a sponge and a basin of water. And tell Miss Wallace to bring her sticking plaster."

Morgan, very white, was sitting on the opposite lounge trying to stop with a handkerchief the blood

from a scalp wound. From where I lay I could see the body of Williams just outside the saloon. A stray bullet from one of the retreating mutineers had killed him at the very close of the battle.

Altogether that left us five sound men, counting Blue as a man, and three wounded ones. The pirates had suffered more. One I had disposed of at the first rush, just before they reached the cabin, and the flunky had wounded one of the firemen.

Yeager had picked off Johnson in the run for the bridge, and Sam had wounded Caine. In addition to these at least two more had been blooded in the scrimmage at close quarters outside the wheelhouse.

"Eight of them left against five of us, not counting the wounded on either side," Yeager summed up.

"What has become of Philips?" I asked, remembering that I had not seen him since the row began.

"Thought I saw him run down stairs when the beggars poured in on us here, sir," Alderson answered.

Later the poor fellow was found in his berth, trembling like an aspen leaf. He had locked his door and buried his face in the pillows.

A shock of red hair above a very white face ap-

peared at the head of the companionway. "Is—is it all over?" gasped a small voice.

"Yes, Jimmie, right now it is. And you'll notice that we're still sticking to the saddle, son, and not pulling leather either," observed the plainsman cheerfully.

"I—I didn't know it would be like this," murmured the boy. "I thought——" His voice tailed out and he dropped limply into a seat, his fascinated eyes fixed on my bleeding arm.

Yeager clasped a hand on the boy's shoulder.

"Brace up, kid. The first round is ours, strong. We've had to hustle, but I reckon we've given them a hectic time of it. They'll not bother us for quite some hours. Captain Bothwell is busy explaining to a real sore outfit just why his plans miscarried."

"Is Mr. Sedgwick—killed?" asked the boy, swallowing hard.

I laughed faintly.

"He's worth a dozen dead men yet, Jimmie."

And to prove it I fell back among the pillows, unconscious.

CHAPTER XV

THE MORNING AFTER

My opening eyes fell upon Evelyn. She was putting the last touches to the bandage on my arm, which was already dressed and bound. Evidently I had been unconscious some time.

"It's all right. We won," were my first words to her.

"I know," she answered with a faint glow of color. "Thanks to the brave men who risked their lives for us!"

"Poor Williams was killed, and Morgan was hurt. Has his wound been looked to?"

"On the job now," sang out Yeager. "When I get through with him he'll be as good as new. Eh, Morgan?"

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir," returned that impassive individual.

"Where's Sam?" I asked.

"Back at the wheel."

"Alone?"

"Alderson is with him. Don't worry about

them. You couldn't dynamite that bunch of pirates on deck just now. There'll be nothing doing until they get Dutch courage from the bottle. We jolted them a heap harder than they did us," Tom rejoined lightly.

It was all very well for him to keep up his cheerful talk to raise the spirits of our friends, but I did not forget the fact that since the beginning of hostilities we had lost as many men as they had in killed, and only one less in wounded. To be sure, with the exception of Dugan, their disabled were in worse condition than ours. Morgan had only a scratch, and a day or two of rest would set me right.

"Time is fighting for us too, you bet," continued Tom briskly. "We're a unit, and I'll bet they're pulling already every which way. We've got them traveling south, Miss Wallace."

Perhaps his cheerful, matter-of-fact talk was the best possible tonic for the depression which had settled upon us. I could not help think what a blessing it was that we had picked up at Los Angeles this competent frontiersman whose strong, brown hands could make or dress a wound with equal skill.

It was plain to me that during the next few hours I would not be of much use. Out of ten

thousand, Tom Yeager was the one I would have picked to take charge of the defense in my absence.

When a few minutes later the beat of the screw began again the sound of it was like wine to me. It meant that, for the present, the mutineers had had enough. They would join in a tacit truce while the yacht was being worked south.

"Help Mr. Sedgwick down to his cabin, Morgan, and then both of you turn in for a few hours' sleep. We'll look out for trouble. Won't we, Jimmie? You and I and Billie Blue, eh?"

"Yes, Mr. Yeager."

"You'll call us if another attack threatens?" I asked.

"Sure."

The steady *throb—throb—throb* of the propeller was again shaking the yacht as she took up her journey. This might be a ruse to throw us off our guard, but I did not think so. The enemy was badly demoralized, and the chances were that Bothwell would welcome a chance to whip his forces into shape again.

"Is the door from the galley to the main deck locked and nailed up, Billie?" I asked of the flunky.

"Yes, sir."

"Nail planks across the window too. Philips will

help you get dinner if you can find him. I'll expect you to see that our party is well fed."

"Yes, sir," the young fellow promised.

"You must go to your room at a moment's notice, Miss Wallace. Have Philips nail up your porthole. You need not be a bit afraid. We hold a very safe position at present. Get all the sleep you can to-night."

"That's good advice, Mr. Sedgwick. Take it yourself," she returned with a little flicker of a wan smile.

For an instant her hand, warm and firm, rested in mine. If I had not been sure of my love before, there was no uncertainty now. While her brave eyes met mine I seemed to drown fathoms deep in the blue of them. Trouble was what I read in them, but part of that trouble was for me. I gloried in that certainty.

She might not love me—it was presumptuous to suppose she did—but at least I held a place in her regard. That was the thought I carried with me down-stairs, and it stayed pleasantly with me till I fell asleep in spite of the pain in my arm.

About nine o'clock I was awakened by a knock on the door. Philips had brought me dinner on a tray.

His eye would not meet mine. He was ashamed

because he had shown the white feather in the scrimmage.

"I—I've got a wife and three little children, sir," he blurted out before he left.

I nodded pleasantly at him.

"You're going to see them again. But you must help us beat those ruffians. You see we can do it. We've done it once."

"Yes, sir. I—hope to do better next time."

"I'm sure you will, Philips."

We shook hands on it.

I must have fallen asleep again almost immediately. When I opened my eyes it was day. I pushed the electric bell. Philips presently appeared.

"All well?" I asked him.

"Yes, sir. No more trouble. The yacht is still on her course. Doing about nine knots I should judge."

"Heard from Dugan this morning?"

"He isn't doing just what you could call first rate, sir. I think he is delirious. Miss Wallace and Miss Berry are taking care of him by turns."

"And Morgan?"

"Quite all right, sir. Your arm must be stiff. Shall I shave you this morning? I used to be a barber, sir."

"Thanks. If you have time."

Breakfast was served in the English fashion, for it was necessary to keep some one on guard all the time. The Arizonian was making play with a platter of bacon and fried eggs when I joined him.

"How d'ye do? Ready for the round-up again?" he asked cheerfully, with his mouth full.

"My arm's stiff, and when I move there's a pain jumps in it. Otherwise I'm fit as a fiddle. Anything new in the way of trouble?"

"Not a thing. We've arranged a code of signals with our friends at the wheel. You'll find the code pasted up in the saloon. Say, what do you think? That girl slipped out with breakfast for Cap. Blythe and Alderson while I wasn't looking."

"Crossed the deck with it?"

"That's whatever, and sauntered back as cool as you please. Two or three of them were on the forecastle deck, but they didn't lift a hand to hurt her."

I drew a long breath.

"We mustn't let her do it again."

"Not while I'm in the game. She's an ace-high trump just the same. Wonder if she would have any use for a maverick rancher from the alkali

country? I got a pretty good outfit in the Flying D."

"Better ask her."

"I'm going to," he answered coolly. "Drift that butter down this way, will you?"

"Where is she now?" I asked.

"Not up yet. She took a two-hour turn watching while we slept. Then she sat by Dugan for a while. You'd ought to have seen her at the piano singing 'My Maryland' and 'Dixie' to us just as if she had starred in a mutiny every week of her life. She was doing it for what they call the moral effect, and it sure did keep up the nerve of the boys. I could see Jimmie and Billie get real gay again. Used to live in Tennessee, you know."

"Jimmie or Billie?" I asked innocently.

"You know who I mean all right, you old son of a gun. Try this bacon. It's the genuine guaranteed article. That Billie boy is some cook. Seems her mother was a Southerner before Wallace married her."

"What was she afterward?"

"My, you're a humorist! Say, do you reckon that little bald spot on the crown of my haid would be objectionable to her? I've never monkeyed with these here hair tonics, but I'd be willing to take a whirl at them."

"Here she comes now. You can ask her."

"Did you sleep well?" the young woman asked, after we had exchanged morning greetings.

"Clear round the clock and then some more. You must have had a fine night's rest yourself from what I hear. On watch till one, and nursing Dugan *from* one. Wasn't that about it?"

"Not quite. I had three hours' sleep. Is your arm paining you much?"

"Don't waste any sympathy on him, Miss Evelyn," the cowman interrupted. "His arm's just as good as a new wooden one, and his repartee is as sharp as the cutlas that broke the skin on it."

She smiled as she began on her grapefruit. "Are you boys quarreling?"

"He hasn't had time to quarrel. He has been making a dreary waste of what was once a platter of eggs and bacon."

"Now I like that," Tom protested.

"So I judge. Never mind, Miss Wallace. Billie can cook you some more."

"Who is on guard?" Evelyn asked.

"The kid. He's a scout for fair too; imagines he's Apache Jim, the terror of the Navajos, or some other paper-backed hero. I hope his gun won't go off and shoot him up."

We made a lively breakfast of it till Yeager had

to leave. You may think it strange that we could laugh and jest on that death ship, but one gets accustomed to the strain and on the reflex from anxiety arrives at a temporary gaiety.

After the cattleman had taken his breezy departure a constraint fell upon us. Evelyn's eyes were shy, and mine not a great deal bolder. Yesterday we could have chatted away with the most delightful freedom; to-day we were confined to the veriest commonplaces.

And all because our eyes had met for one long instant the evening before and hinted at something in the unspoken language of young people the world over.

The arrival of Jimmie Welch with a very robust appetite helped things a good deal, and we were presently ourselves again. After breakfast Miss Wallace went to relieve her aunt at the bedside of the wounded carpenter while I mounted to the bridge to take Blythe's place, Tom doing the same for Alderson.

It struck me as a piece of grim satire that I should be ringing orders down to the men in the engine room with whom a few hours before we had been battling for life, and probably soon would be again.

It was beyond doubt that we would have to meas-

ure strength with them a second time. Bothwell would never let us run into port at Panama if he could help it. The men were probably not anxious for another brush after the drubbing they had received, but the situation forced their hands. They must either take the ship or let us give them up to the authorities as mutineers.

My opinion is that if Bothwell had not been recognized by Jimmie he would have waited until we were actually on the treasure ground, and perhaps even until we had lifted it.

From the sounds that came forward to us from the forecastle it was plain that the enemy were drinking pretty steadily. More than once I saw an empty bottle flung through a porthole into the sea. Occasionally some one appeared on the deck aft, and from the drunken shouts bawled up and down the hatchway the condition of the crew could be guessed.

Blythe and I agreed that this probably meant an attack after darkness had fallen. Fortified by the courage which comes from whisky, they would try and slip up on us in the night and win by a surprise.

CHAPTER XVI

THE NIGHT ATTACK

The captain and I were in the wheelhouse when the attack came. It must have been an hour past midnight of a gentle starry night, without the faintest breath of wind in the air. Ever since dark the vibration of the propeller had ceased.

No doubt the charge was intended for a surprise, but we had half a minute of warning. Dimly I could make out figures moving tiptoe at the head of the stairway. Three times I flashed a lantern in signal to our friends. Almost simultaneously came the rush along the deck.

This time they took cover as they advanced, scattering like a covey of young quail. One dropped behind a boat here, another there. Some crouched close to the deckhouse. Bullets sang about our ears from invisible foes.

It looked as if their intention was to pick us off without exposing themselves. The thing could be done too. For a rifle ball would tear through the flimsy woodwork of our shelter as if it had been paper.

"We've got to get out of here," I told my friend.

"Confound it, yes. But where shall we go?"

"What's that? Listen, Sam."

From below and to the left of us there came a sound as of some one moving. We could hear stealthy voices in animated whisper.

"I see their game," Blythe murmured in my ear. "Those fellows on deck are to keep us busy pot-shotting us while the rest climb up from below and close with us when we're not looking."

A bullet zipped through a window and left a little round hole. It must have passed between our heads.

"Hot work," said the Englishman coolly, putting down his rifle and taking up a revolver and a cutlas. "We'd better sally out and have a look at the gentlemen who are climbing up the stanchions. You take that side and I'll take this."

We were not a moment too soon. As I peered over the bridge rail an outstretched hand was reaching for a hold. Instantly it was withdrawn. The moonlight poured like a spotlight on the uplifted face of the sailor Neidlinger. Never have I seen a look more expressive of stupid, baffled surprise. His mouth was open, his eyes popping. But when I made a motion to aim my revolver he slid down

the stanchion with a rush, knocking over the fellow supporting him from below.

I paid no more attention to him, for the feet of those who had been shooting at us were already scurrying forward.

"Blythe," I called in warning.

But the captain was engaged with a mutineer who had climbed up in the way Neidlinger had attempted. A second man—and I saw in an instant that it was Caine—was astride the rail on his way to support the first. Half way over he had stopped to take a shot at Sam.

I fired from my hip without waiting to take aim. It was the luckiest shot of my life. The boatswain's shoulders sagged, his fingers relaxed so that the weapon clattered on the floor, and slowly his figure swayed outward. There was no grip to his knees. He toppled overboard, head first. I heard the plop as his body dived into the sea.

Blythe cut down his man at the same instant.

"Back to the wheelhouse," I shouted.

We were barely in time. They came crowding in on us pell-mell. We had already switched off the light. Now the lantern was dashed to pieces by trampling heels.

I was flung back against the wheel and the revolver knocked from my hand. Sinewy fingers

gripped my throat and forced me down until I thought my back would break. Close to my ear a gun exploded. The pressure on my jugular relaxed instantly. The body of my opponent sank slowly to the floor and lay there limp.

I took a long breath, leaped across the prostrate figure, and flung myself upon another. We struggled. I became aware that we had the room to ourselves. The others were fighting outside.

The vessel had fallen into the trough of the waves. In one of its lurches the moon flooded the place with light.

"Sam!" I cried, and he "Jack!"

In the darkness we had mistaken each other for the enemy.

Catching up a cutlas I followed him into the open. Our friends had come and gone again. To say that they were going would be more accurate. For they were now in full flight, the pack of wolves in chase.

A few moments earlier and we might have saved the day. Now we could only pursue the pursuers.

Blythe leaped down the steps, revolver in hand. I followed, but my foot caught on a body lying at the foot of the ladder. A hand caught my coat.

"Gimme a lift, partner," asked a voice.

"You, Tom?" I cried, helping him up. "Hurt, are you?"

"Knocked in the head. A bit groggy. That's all."

The delay made me a witness rather than an actor in the dénouement. Our friends had disappeared within the saloon and slammed the door. The foremost mutineer reached it, tried the handle, and threw his weight against the panels. The others came to his assistance. A revolver shot through the door dropped one of them. The others fell back at once.

They met Blythe. A stoker swung a cutlas and rushed for him. Full in the forehead a bullet from the captain's revolver crashed into his brain. Like a football tackler the body plunged forward to Sam's feet.

For a moment nobody moved or spoke. Then,

"My God!" groaned Henry Fleming.

I cannot account for it. These men had been brave enough in the thick of the fight while facing numbers not so very inferior to their own. But now, standing there three to one, it seemed as if some wave of horror sickened them at sight of the lifeless body plunging along the deck.

They stood there with eyes distended, while

Blythe, grimly erect, faced them as motionless as a statue.

"Gawd, I've 'ad enough," the cook gasped, and got his fat bulk to the stairway with incredible swiftness.

The others were at his heel, fighting for the first chance down.

A bullet clipped the deck in front of me. I looked up hastily to see Bothwell's malevolent face in the wheel-house window.

"Turn about, Mr. Sedgwick," he jeered, and let fly again.

Half dragging him with me, I got Yeager into the shadow.

"Got a revolver?" I whispered.

"Yes." He felt for it in the darkness. "Damn! I must 'a dropped it when Bothwell hit me over the coconut."

"Are you good for a run to the saloon? He'll pick us off just as soon as the moon comes out from behind that cloud."

A bullet took a splinter from the rail beside me.

"We'd better toddle," agreed the cattleman. "Go ahead."

I scudded for safety, Yeager at my heels. We reached the door of the saloon just as the captain did.

"Let us in. Captain Blythe and friends," I cried, hammering on a panel.

Some one unlocked the door. It was Dugan.

"You here?" I exclaimed.

"Yes, sir. I heard the shooting and came up just in time to lock the door on Mack. Think I wounded him through the door afterward, sir."

"Any of our men short?" Blythe asked quickly, glancing around with the keen, quiet eye of a soldier.

Alderson spoke up.

"Fleming cut Blue down as we tried to force the steps, sir."

"Killed him, you think?"

"No doubt of it, sir."

"Any more lost?"

We did not notice it till a few minutes later, but little Jimmie Welch was missing. None of us was seriously wounded in the scrimmage, though nearly all had marks to show. Even Philips had a testimonial of valor in the form of a badly swollen eye.

"They've suffered more than we have. Check up, my men. Mack, dead or badly wounded, shot by Dugan. Can you name any, Alderson?"

"Only Sutton, sir, that you killed out here. There was a man lying on the bridge when we got there. Don't know who, sir."

"Tot Dennis," answered Blythe, who had cut him down at the same time when I disposed of the boatswain.

I mentioned Caine.

"Didn't you finish another in the wheel-house, Jack?"

"I didn't. You did."

The captain shook his head.

"You're wrong about that. Must have been you."

This puzzled me at the time, but we learned later that the man—he turned out to be the stoker Billie Blue had dirked in the first fight—had been killed by an unexpected ally who joined us later.

"Counting Mack, they've lost five to our one," Sam summed up.

"Hope they've got a bellyful by this time," I said bitterly.

"They've won the wheel—for the present. But that's unimportant. Bothwell can't hold it. We'll starve him out. Practically it's our fight."

What our captain said was quite true. Even if Bothwell could have solved the food problem and the question of sleep, he dared not leave his allies too long alone for fear they might make terms and surrender.

For we had beaten them again. They had left

now only seven men (not counting Mack), at least two of whom were wounded. This was exactly the same number that we had. Whereas the odds had been against us, now they were very much in our favor when one considered morale and quality.

At Blythe's words we raised a cheer. I have heard heartier ones, for we were pretty badly battered up. But that cheer—so we heard later—put the final touch to the depression of the mutineers.

"Mr. Sedgwick, will you kindly step down-stairs and notify the ladies that the day is ours? Get me some water, Morgan, and I'll take a look at Mr. Yeager's head. Philips, find Jimmie. Alderson, will you keep guard for the present? You'd better get back to bed, Dugan. I want to say that each one of you deserves a medal. If the treasure is ever found I promise, on behalf of Miss Wallace, that every honest man shall share in it."

At this there was a second cheer and we scattered to obey orders.

When I knocked on the door of Miss Wallace's stateroom a shaky voice answered.

"Who is there?"

"It is I—Sedgwick."

The door opened. Evelyn, very pale, was standing before me with a little revolver in her hand.

She wore a kind of kimono of some gray stuff, loose about the beautifully modeled throat, in which just now a pulse was beating fast. Sandals were on her feet, and from beneath the gown her toes peeped.

"What is it? Tell me," she breathed in a whisper, her finger on her lips.

I judged that her aunt had slept through the noise of the firing.

"They attacked us on the bridge again. We had the best of it."

"Is anybody—hurt?" she asked tremulously.

"Five of them have been killed or badly wounded. We lost Billie Blue, poor fellow."

"Dead?" her white lips framed.

"I'm afraid so."

"Nobody else?"

I hesitated.

"Little Jimmie is missing. We are afraid——"

Tears filled her eyes and brimmed over.

"Poor Jimmie!"

"I'll not swear that the back of my eyes did not scorch with hot tears too. I thought of the likable little Arab, red-headed, freckled and homely, and I blamed myself bitterly that I had ever let him rejoin us at Los Angeles.

"He wouldn't have come if it hadn't been for

me. I asked you to let him," the young woman reproached herself.

"It isn't your fault. You meant it for the best."

Of a sudden she turned half from me and leaned against the door-jamb, covering her face with her hands. She was sobbing very softly.

I put my arm across her shoulders and petted her awkwardly. Presently she crowded back the sobs and whispered brokenly, not to me, but as a relief to her surcharged feelings.

"This dreadful ship of death! This dreadful ship! Why did I ever lead true men to their deaths for that wicked treasure?"

I do not know how it happened, but in her wretchedness the girl swayed toward me ever so slightly. My arms went round her protectingly. For an instant her body came to me in sweet surrender, the soft curves of her supple figure relaxed in weariness. Then she pushed me from her gently.

"Not now—not now."

I faced a closed door, but as I went up the companionway with elastic heels my heart sang jubilantly.

CHAPTER XVII

A TASTE OF THE INQUISITION

It could have been no more than five minutes after I left her that Evelyn followed me to the upper deck saloon. Yet in the interval her nimble fingers had found time to garb her in a simple blue princess dress she had found near to her hand.

Without looking at me she went straight to Blythe, who was sponging the wrist of Alderson.

"You'll let me help, won't you?" she asked, with such sweet simplicity that I fell fathoms deeper in love.

"Of course. You're our chief surgeon. Eh, Alderson?"

The sailor grinned. Though he was a little embarrassed he was grateful for the addition to the staff.

After they had finished I brought her water to wash her hands. For the first time since she had entered the room our gaze met.

Braver eyes no woman ever had, but the thick lashes fluttered down now and a wave of pink beat

into her cheeks. Moved as she was by a touch of shy confusion, the oval of her face stirred delicately as if with the spirit of fire, she seemed a very blush rose, a creature of so fine a beauty as to stir a momentary fear.

But I knew her to be strong, even if slight, and abrim with health. When she walked away with that supple, feathered tread of hers, so firm and yet so light, the vitality of her physique reasserted itself.

"Some one slipping this way in the shadows, Captain Blythe," spoke up Morgan, who was on guard.

Sam had been reloading his revolver. At once he stepped to the door.

"Who goes there? Hands up! I have you covered. Move forward into the light. Oh, it's you, Smith! What do you want?"

"I've come to give myself up, sir. I'm sick of it. Very likely you won't believe me, sir, but I joined under compulsion to save my life. I didn't dare leave them so long as Captain Bothwell——"

"*Mr.* Bothwell," corrected Blythe sharply.

"Mr. Bothwell, sir, I meant. He watched me as if I were a prisoner."

"I think I noticed you on my bridge with a re-

volver in your hand," the Englishman told him dryly.

"Yes, sir. But I fired in the air, except once when I shot the fireman who was killing Mr. Sedgwick over the wheel."

I turned in astonishment to Blythe.

"That explains it. Some one certainly saved me. If you didn't it must have been Smith."

"That's one point to your credit," Blythe admitted. "So now you want to be an honest man?"

"I always have been at heart, sir. I had no chance to come before. They kept me unarmed except during the fighting."

His head bandaged with a blood-soaked bandanna, his face unshaven and bloodstained, Smith was a sorry enough sight. But his eye met the captain's fairly. I don't think it occurred to any of us seriously to doubt him.

Sam laughed grimly.

"You look the worse for the wars, my friend."

Smith put his hand to the bound head and looked at the captain reproachfully.

"Your cutlas did it at the pilot-house, sir."

"You should be more careful of the company you keep, my man."

"Yes, sir. I did try to slip away once, but they brought me back."

"Let me look at your head. Perhaps I can do something for it," Evelyn suggested to the sailor.

While she prepared the dressings I put the question to Smith.

"Jimmie. Oh, yes, sir. He's down in the f'c'sle. Gallagher ran across him and took him down there."

This was good news, the best I had heard since the mutiny began. It seemed that the boy had slipped out to get a shot at the enemy, and that his escape had been cut off by the men returning from the attack.

Judging from what Smith said the men were very down-hearted and in vicious spirits. They were ready to bite at the first hand in reach, after the manner of trapped coyotes.

"How many of them are there?" I asked.

"Let's see. There's the two Flemings, sir, and Gallagher, and the cook, and Neidlinger, and Mack, but he won't last long."

"Do you think they're likely to hurt the boy?"

"Not unless they get to drinking, sir. They want him for a hostage. But there has been a lot of drinking. You can't tell what they will do when they're in liquor."

I came to an impulsive decision. We couldn't leave Jimmie to his fate. The men were ready

to give up the fight if the thing could be put to them right. The time to strike was now, in the absence of Bothwell, while they were out of heart at their failure.

Why shouldn't I go down into the forecastle and see what could be done? That there was some danger in it could not be denied, but not nearly so much as if the Russian had been down there.

I was an officer of the ship, and though that would have helped me little if they had been sure of victory it would have a good deal of weight now.

Blythe would, I knew, forbid me to go. Therefore I did not ask him. But I took Yeager aside and told him what I intended.

"I'll likely be back in half an hour, perhaps less. I don't want you to tell Sam unless he has to know. Don't let him risk defeat by attempting a rescue in case I don't show up. Tell him I'm playing off my own bat. That's a bit of English slang he'll understand."

"Say! Let me go too," urged the cattleman, his eyes glistening.

"No. We can't go in force. I'm not even going to take a weapon. That would queer the whole thing. It's purely a moral and not a physical argument I'm making."

He did not want to see it that way, but in the end he grumblingly assented, especially when I put it to him that he must stay and keep an eye on Bothwell.

While Blythe was down in his cabin getting a shave I watched my chance and slipped down to the main deck. Cautiously I ventured into the forecastle, tiptoeing down the ladder without noise.

"Dead as a door nail. That makes seven gone to Davy Jones's locker," I heard a despondent voice say.

"'E could sing a good song, Mack could, and 'e carried 'is liquor like a man, but that didn't 'elp 'im from being shot down like a dog. It'll be that wye with us next."

"Stow that drivel, cookie," growled a voice which I recognized as belonging to the older Fleming. "You're nice, cheerful company for devils down on their luck. Ain't things bad enough without you croaking like a sky pilot?"

"That's wot I say, says I; we'll all croak before this blyme row is over," Higgins prophesied.

I sauntered forward with my hands in my pockets.

"Looks that way, doesn't it? Truth is, you've made a mess of it from first to last. Whichever way you look at it the future is devilishly unpleas-

ant. Even if you live to be hanged—which isn't at all likely—one can't call it a cheerful end."

Conceive, if you can, a more surprised lot of ruffians than these. They leaped to their feet and stared at me in astonishment. I'll swear four revolvers jumped to sight while one could bat an eyelid.

I leaned on the edge of the table and gave them the most care-free grin I could summon. All the time I was wondering whether some fool would perhaps blaze away at me and do his thinking afterward.

"How did you get down here?" the senior engineer demanded.

"Walked down. I'm really surprised at you, Fleming. What would Bothwell think of you? Why, I might have shot half of you before Higgins could say Jack Robinson."

It showed how ripe they were for my purpose that at the mention of Bothwell's name two or three growled curses at him.

"He got us into this, he did; promised us a fortune if we'd join him," Gallagher said sulkily.

"And no blood shed, Mr. Sedgwick. That's wot 'e promised," whined the cook.

"Probably he meant none of ours," I explained ironically.

"He was going to wait till you'd got the treasure and then put you in a boat near the coast," Gallagher added.

Neidlinger spat sulkily at a knot in the floor. His eyes would not meet mine. It was a fair guess that he was no hardened mutineer, but had been caught in a net through lack of moral backbone.

"Afraid Bothwell isn't a very safe man to follow. He's let you be mauled up pretty badly. I've a notion he'll slip away and leave you to be hanged without the comfort of his presence."

"You don't need to rub that in, Mr. Sedgwick," advised George Fleming. "And perhaps, since you're here, you will explain your business."

It must be said for George Fleming that at least he was a hardy villain and no weakling. The men were like weather-vanes. They veered with each wind that blew.

"That's right," chimed in Gallagher. "We didn't ask your company. If we go to hell I shouldn't wonder but you'll travel the road first, sir. Take a hitch and a half turn on this. We're in the same boat, you and us. Now you take an oar and pull us out of the rough water, Mr. Sedgwick."

I laughed.

"Not I, Gallagher. You made your own bed,

and I'm hanged if I'll lie in it, though I believe it is bad taste to refer to hanging in this company. *I* didn't start a little mutiny. *I* didn't murder as good a mate as any seaman could ask for. It isn't *my* fault that a round half dozen of you are dead and gone to feed the fishes."

Higgins groaned lugubriously. Neidlinger shifted his feet uneasily. Not one of them but was impressed.

Harry Fleming glanced at his brother, cleared his throat, and spoke up.

"Mr. Sedgwick, spit it out. What have you to offer? Will Captain Blythe let this be a bygone if we return to duty? That's what we want to know. If not, we've got to fight it out. A blind man could see that."

I told them the truth, that I had no authority to speak for Blythe. He would probably think it his duty to give them up to the authorities if they were still on board when we reached Panama.

It was pitiful to see how they clutched at every straw of hope.

"Well, sir, what do you mean by that if? Will he stand back and let us escape?"

"All of you but Bothwell. Mind, I don't promise this. Why not send a deputation to the captain and ask for terms?"

Higgins slapped his fat thigh.

"By crikey, 'e's said it. A delegation to the captain. That's the bloomin' ticket."

Pat to his suggestion came an unexpected and startling answer.

"Fortunately it won't be necessary to send the delegation, since your captain has come down to join you."

The voice was Bothwell's; so, too, were the ironic insolence, the sardonic smile, the air of contemptuous mastery that sat so lightly on him. He might be the greatest scoundrel unhanged—and that was a point upon which I had a decided opinion—but I shall never deny that there was in him the magnetic force which made him a leader of men.

Immediately I recognized defeat for my attempt to end the mutiny at a stroke. His very presence was an inspiration to persistence in evil. For though he had brought them nothing but disaster, the fellow had a way of impressing himself without appearing to care whether he did or not.

The careless contempt of his glance emphasized the difference between him and them. He was their master, though a fortnight before none of them had ever seen Bothwell. They feared and accepted his leadership, even while they distrusted him.

The men seemed visibly to stiffen. Instead of beseeching looks I got threatening ones. Three minutes before I had been dictator; now I was a prisoner, and if I could read signs one in a very serious situation.

"I'm waiting for the deputation," suggested Bothwell, his dark eye passing from one to another and resting on Higgins.

The unfortunate cook began to perspire.

"Just our wye of 'aving a little joke, captain," he protested in a whine.

"You didn't hear aright, Bothwell. A deputation to the captain was mentioned," I told him.

"And I'm captain of this end of the ship, or was at last accounts. Perhaps Mr. Sedgwick has been elected in my absence," he sneered.

"You bet he ain't," growled Gallagher.

"It's a position I should feel obliged to decline. No sinking ship for me, thank you. I've no notion of trying to be a twentieth century Captain Kidd. And, by the way, he was hanged, too, wasn't he, captain?"

"That's a prophecy, I take it. I'll guarantee one thing: You'll not live to see it fulfilled. You've come to the end of the passage, my friend."

"Indeed!"

"But before you pass out I've a word to say to you about that map."

His eye gave a signal. Before I could stir for resistance even if I had been so minded, George Fleming and Gallagher pinned my back to the table. Bothwell stepped forward and looked down at me.

A second time I glimpsed the Slav behind his veneer of civilization. Opaque and cruel eyes peered into mine through lids contracted to slits. Something in me stronger than fear looked back at him steadily.

His voice was so low that none, I think, except me caught the words. In his manner was an extraordinary bitterness.

"You're the rock I've split on from the first. You stole the map from me—and you tried to steal her. By God, I wipe the slate clean now!"

"I've only one thing to say to you. I'd like to see you strung up, you damned villain!" I replied.

"The last time I asked you for that map your friend from Arizona blundered in. He's not here now. I'm going to find out all you know. You think you can defy me. Before I've done with you I'll make you wish you'd never been born. There are easy deaths and hard ones. You shall take your choice."

With that fiend's eyes glittering into mine it was no easy thing to keep from weakening. I confess

it, the blood along my spine was beginning to freeze. Fortunately I have a face well under control.

"You have a taste for dramatics, Captain Kidd." I raised my voice so that all might hear plainly. "You threaten to torture me. You forget that this is the year 1913. The inquisition is a memory. You are not in Russia now. American sailors—even mutineers—will draw the line at torture."

His face was hard as hammered iron.

"Don't flatter yourself, Mr. Sedgwick. I'm master here. When I give the word you will suffer."

I turned my head and my eyes fell upon Henry Fleming. He had turned white, shaken to the heart. Beyond him was Neidlinger, and the man was moistening his gray lips with his tongue. The fat cockney looked troubled. Plainly they had no stomach for the horrible work that lay before them if I proved resolute.

To fight for treasure was one thing, and I suppose that even in this they had been led to believe that a mere show of force would be sufficient; to lend their aid to torture an officer of the ship was quite another and a more sinister affair.

The Slav in Bothwell had failed to understand the Anglo-Saxon blood with which he was dealing.

I faced the man with a dry laugh.

"We'll see. Begin, you coward!"

Pinned down to the table as I was, he struck me in the face for that.

"You lose no time in proving my words true," I jeered.

An odd mixture is man. Faith, one might have thought Bothwell impervious to shame, but at my words the fellow flushed. He could not quite forget that he had once been a gentleman.

In the way of business he could torture me, wipe me from his path without a second thought, but on the surface he must live up to the artificial code his training had imposed upon him.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Sedgwick. Were there time I would give you satisfaction for that blow in the customary manner. But time presses. I shall have to ask you instead to accept my apologies. I have the devil of a temper."

"So I judge."

"It flares like powder. But I must not waste your time in explanations." From his vest pocket he drew three little cubes of iron. "You still have time, Mr. Sedgwick. The map!"

I flushed to the roots of my hair.

"Never, you Russian devil!"

He selected the hand pinned down by Fleming, perhaps because he was not sure that he could trust

Gallagher. Between my fingers close to the roots he slipped the cubes. His fingers fastened over mine and drew the ends of them together slowly, steadily.

An excruciating pain shot through me. I set my teeth to keep from screaming and closed my eyes to hide the anguish in them.

"You are at liberty to change your mind—and your answer, Mr. Sedgwick," he announced suavely.

"You devil from hell!"

Again I suffered that jagged bolt of pain. It seemed as if my fingers were being rent asunder at the roots. I could not concentrate my attention on anything but the physical agony, yet it seems to me now that Gallagher was muttering a protest across the table.

Bothwell released my hand. I saw a flash of subtle triumph light his eyes.

"A wilful man must have his way, Mr. Sedgwick," he nodded to me, then whispered in the ear of George Fleming, who at once left the room.

They pulled me up from the table and seated me in a chair. Bothwell whistled a bar or two of the sextet from Lucia until he was interrupted by the entrance of the engineer with Jimmie Welch.

In a flash I knew what the man meant to do, and

the devilish ingenuity of it appalled me. He had concluded that I was strung up to endure anything he might inflict.

Now he was going to force me to tell what I knew in order to save the boy from the pain I had myself found almost unendurable.

What must I do? I beat my wits for a way out. One glance around the room showed me that the scoundrel's accomplices would not let him go much further.

The weak spot in his leadership was that he did not realize the humanity which still burned in their lost souls. But at what point would they revolt? I could not let little Jimmie go through the pain I had undergone.

The boy gave a sobbing cry of relief when he saw me and tried to break away to my side. He was flung on the table just as I had been. Gallagher looked at me imploringly while Bothwell fitted the cubes.

Neidlinger stole a step nearer. His fingers were working nervously. Harry Fleming had turned away so as not to see what would follow.

"Mr. Sedgwick, what are they going to do with me?" the frightened little fellow called in terror.

Bothwell took the lad's fingers in his. I opened my lips to surrender—and closed them again.

Neidlinger had drawn still another step nearer. The big blond Scandinavian had reached his limit.

The Slav gave a slight pressure and Jimmie howled. Crouched like a panther, Neidlinger flung himself upon his chief and bore him back to the wall. Bothwell, past his first surprise, lashed out with a straight left and dropped the man.

Simultaneously Gallagher closed with him, tripping Bothwell so that the two went down hard together. Neidlinger crawled forward on hands and knees to help his partner.

Shaking off the grip of the irresolute men holding me, I was in time to seize George Fleming, who had run forward to aid the captain.

From the hatchway a crisp order rang out.

"Back there, Fleming!"

I turned. Blythe and Yeager were standing near the foot of the ladder; behind them Alderson, Smith, Morgan, and Philips. All six were armed. Their weapons covered the mutineers.

"Gallagher—Neidlinger, don't release that man. You are prisoners—all of you," Sam announced curtly.

Taken by surprise, the two sailors had ceased to struggle with Bothwell. I could see the master villain's hand slip to the butt of his revolver.

My foot came down heavily on his wrist and the

fingers fell limp. A moment, and the revolver was in my hand.

Bothwell was handcuffed and disarmed before the eyes of his followers, who in turn had to endure the same ignominy.

The mutiny on the *Argos* was quelled at last.

CHAPTER XVIII

ANCHORED HEARTS

Our rescue had been due to the vigilance of Tom Yeager. He had seen Bothwell slip down from the bridge and follow me to the forecastle.

The first impulse of the Arizonian had been to step out and end the campaign by a fighting finish with the Slav. But second thoughts brought wiser counsels. Blythe, called hurriedly upstairs, had agreed to his proposal to try and determine the mutiny at a stroke.

To both of them it had been clear that Bothwell surrendered the bridge because he was afraid to let me have a talk with the men alone. That my life was in great danger neither doubted.

Swiftly the men had been gathered for the sortie into the forecastle, Evelyn having volunteered to take the wheel until relieved. The success of the plan had been beyond the expectations of any.

Bothwell was the first of the prisoners to speak.

"Let me offer my congratulations, Captain Blythe," he said with suave irony.

The lean, brown face of the Englishman expressed quiet scorn.

"Not necessary at all. It is the only result I have considered from the first. One doesn't expect to be driven from his ship by wharf rats, no matter how numerous they may be."

Bothwell laughed, debonair as ever.

"True enough, captain. My scoundrels made an awful botch of it. They played a good hand devilish badly or we should have won out."

"The devil you would! We beat you from first to last at odds against of two to one nearly. I reckon, Mr. Pirate, you undertook too big a round-up," grinned the cattleman.

"Fortunately there is always a to-morrow," retorted Bothwell with a bow.

"Sometimes it's mortgaged to Jack Ketch."

"I'll wager he doesn't foreclose, Mr. Yeager," answered Boris with a lip smile.

Blythe cut short the repartee.

"We'll put this man in a stateroom and lock him up, Sedgwick. The rest will stay here guarded by Alderson. If one of them makes a suspicous move, shoot him down like a mad dog. Understand, my man?"

"Yes, sir. I'll see they make no trouble," Alderson answered resolutely.

I made a suggestion to our captain. After a moment's consideration he accepted it.

"Very good, Mr. Sedgwick. Have Gallagher, Neidlinger, and Higgins freed. See that they clean the ship up till she is fresh as paint."

The first thing we did was to gather the bodies of the poor fellows who had fallen in the struggles for the ship. Blythe read the burial service before we sank the weighted corpses into the sea.

Under my direction the men then swabbed the decks, washed the woodwork, and scoured the copper plates until they shone.

It was not until luncheon that I found time for more than a word with Evelyn. None of us, I suppose, had suffered more than she and Miss Berry, but they made it their business to help us forget the nightmare through which we had lately passed.

I remember that Miss Wallace looked round from a gay little sally at Jimmie with a smile in her eyes. I was reaching for some fruit when her glance fell upon my hand.

"What's the matter with your fingers?" she asked quickly.

I withdrew my hand promptly. The flesh was swollen and discolored from the attentions of Boris Bothwell.

"I had a little accident—nothing of importance," was my inadequate answer.

Her gaze circled the table, passed from Sam's face to that of Jimmie and from Jimmie to Higgins, who was waiting on us. She must have read a confirmation of her intuition of a secret, for she dropped the subject at once.

"Jack crushed his hand against a piece of iron," explained the captain.

At which Miss Evelyn murmured. "Oh!" and inquired how long it would probably be before we reached the Bay of Panama.

"Using only our canvas we may reach there tomorrow night, and we may not. We can't make very good time till we start the engines again," Blythe said.

"And when are you going to start them?" Miss Berry asked.

"Don't quite know. I'm shy of engineers. The only ones I have are on a vacation," Sam answered with a smile.

They were not to enjoy one very long, however. About sunset the *Argos* began to rock gently on a sea no longer glassy.

"Cap says we're going to have trouble," Yeager informed me. "When you get this sultry smell in the air and that queer look in the sky there is go-

ing to be something doing. She's going to begin to buck for fair."

I noticed that Blythe was taking in sail and that the wind was rising.

"Knock the irons off the Flemings and send Gallagher down into the engine room to stoke for them. We'll need more hands. This thing is going to hit us like a wall of wind soon," he told me.

When I returned from the forecastle the sea had risen. As I was standing on the bridge a voice called my name. I looked down to see Evelyn on the promenade deck in a long, close-fitting waterproof coat, her hair flying a little wildly in the breeze. In the face upturned to mine was a very vivid interest.

"We're in for it. There's going to be a real squall," she cried delightedly.

I stepped down and tucked her arm under mine, for the deck was already tipping in the heavy run of seas.

Most of our canvas was in, and the booming wind was humming through the rest with growing power. The *Argos* put her nose into the whitecaps and ran like a racer, for the engines were shaking the yacht as she plowed forward.

The young woman turned to me an eager, mobile face into which the wind had whipped a rich color.

"What would you take to be somewhere else? Back in your stuffy old law office, say?"

The lurch of the staggering yacht threw her forward so that the lithe, supple body leaned against me and the breath of the dimpling lips was in my nostrils.

Just an instant she lay there, with that smile of warm eyes and rose-leaf mouth to tantalize me, before she recovered and drew back.

"Not for a thousand dollars a minute," I answered, a trumpet peal of indomitable happiness ringing in my heart.

From the wheel-house Blythe shouted a warning to be careful. His voice scarcely reached us through the singing of the wind. I nodded and took hold of the little hand that lay close to mine.

"You must be a rich man to value the pleasure of the hour so highly," she answered lightly, with a look quick and questioning at me.

The squall that had flung itself across the waters hit us in earnest now. We went down into the yawning troughs before us with drunken plunges and climbed the glassy hills beyond to be ready for another dive.

"The richest man alive if last night was not a dream."

Our fingers interlaced, palms kissing each other.

"Does it seem to you a dream?" she asked, deep in a valley of the seas.

From the top of the next comber I answered:

"It did until you joined me here, but now I know you belong to me forever, both in the land of dreams and waking."

"Did the storm teach you that?"

I looked out at the flying scud and back at the storm-bewitched girl with laughter rippling from her throat and the wild joy of a rare moment in her eyes.

"Yes, the storm. It brought you to my arms and your heart to mine."

"I think it did, Jack; the wee corner of it that was not yours already."

Her shy eyes fell and I drew her close to me. In the dusk that had fallen like a cloak over the ship her lips met mine with the sweetest surrender in the world.

So in the clamorous storm our hearts found safe anchorage.

CHAPTER XIX

SENSE AND NONSENSE

The squall passed as suddenly as it had swept upon us, and left in its wake a night of stars and moonbeat.

Apparently there was no question of returning the mutineers to the irons from which we had freed them. Alderson, Smith, Neidlinger, and Higgins were grouped together on the forecastle deck in amiable chat.

Blythe was still at the wheel, and our cheerful friend from the cattle country at the piano bawling out the identical chorus I had interrupted so ruthlessly just before the first blow of the mutiny was struck.

He was lustily singing as Evelyn and I trod the deck.

"Tom sings as if with conviction. I hope it may not be deep-rooted," I laughed.

"If you mean me——"

"I don't mean Miss Berry."

To my surprise she took the words seriously.

"It isn't so, Jack. Say it isn't so."

"Does that mean that it is?" I asked.

"No-o. Only I can't bear to think that our happiness will make anybody else unhappy."

"It doesn't appear to be making him unhappy."

"But he doesn't know—yet."

"Then he's really serious? I wasn't quite sure." She sighed.

"I wish he wasn't. How girls can like to make men fall in love with them I can't conceive. He's such a splendid fellow, too."

"He's a man, every inch of him," I offered by way of comfort. "It won't hurt him to love a good woman even if he doesn't win her. He'll recover, but it will do him a lot of good first."

"Would you feel so complacent if it were you?" she asked slyly, with a flash of merry eyes.

We happened to be in the shadow of the smokestack. After the interlude I expounded my philosophy more at length.

"He's young yet—at least his heart is. A man has to love a nice girl or two before he is educated to know the right one when he meets her. I don't pity Yeager—not a great deal, anyhow. It's life, you know," I concluded cheerfully.

"Oh, I see. A man has to love a nice girl or two as an educative process." Her voice trailed into

the rising inflection of a question. "Then the right girl ought to thank me for helping to prepare Mr. Yeager for her—if I am."

"That's a point of view worth considering," I assented.

"But I suppose she will never even know my name," she mused.

"Most likely not," was my complacent answer.

Whereupon she let me have her thrust with a little purr of amusement in her voice.

"Any more than I shall know what nice girls prepared you for me."

"*Touché,*" I conceded with a laugh. "I didn't know you were the kind of young woman that lays traps for a fellow to tumble into."

"And I didn't know you were a war-worn veteran toughened by previous campaigns," she countered gaily. "You've been very liberally educated, didn't you say?"

"No, I didn't say. This is how I put it to myself: A boy owes something to the nice girls all about him. One would not like to think, for instance, that the youths of Tennessee had been so insensible as never to have felt a flutter when your long lashes drifted their way," I diplomatically suggested.

"How nicely you wrap it up," she said with her

low, soft laugh. "And must my heart have fluttered, too, for them? Unless it has, I won't be properly educated for you, shall I?"

"Ah, that's the difference. You are born perfect lovers, but we have to acquire excellence through experience."

"Oh!"

An interjection can sometimes express more than words. My sweetheart's left me wondering just what she meant. There was amusement in it, but there was, too, a demure suppression to which I had not the key.

She, too, I judged, had known a few love episodes in her life. Perhaps she had been engaged before, as is sometimes the custom among Southern girls. The thought gave me a queer little stab of pain.

Yeager came out of the deck pavilion as we passed.

"I say, let's have some music, good people."

I looked at my watch.

"My turn at the wheel. Maybe Blythe will join you."

He did. From the pilot-house I could hear his clear tenor and Evelyn's sweet soprano filling the night with music. Presently they drifted into patriotic songs, in which Tom came out strong if not

melodious. But when the piano sounded the notes of "Dixie" Evelyn's voice rose alone, clear and full-throated as that of a lark.

After being relieved by Alderson I turned in and slept round the clock. The tune of drumming engines was in my ears when I woke.

"Sam is making her walk," I thought, and when I reached the deck I learned that we had entered the Gulf of Panama. A long, low line showed dimly in the foggy distance to the left. We were running parallel with it, Prieto Point directly in front of us.

With the exception of the older Fleming, who had been transferred to the same cabin as Bothwell, all the crew were at work. Only the true men, however, were armed. From the looks cast by the former mutineers toward the blurred shore line it was plain that they looked forward to Panama with anxiety.

In the canal zone, with the flag of the United States flying to the breeze, the law would give them short shrift. We observed that whenever their duties permitted it, they drew uneasily together in earnest talk.

Blythe smiled grimly.

"Our friends don't like the wages of sin, now that pay day is at hand. I'll give you two to one,

Jack, that before an hour is up you'll see a delegation to the captain."

He was right. As Sam stepped down from the bridge, having turned the wheel over to Alderson, he was approached timidly by Neidlinger and Gallagher. Higgins, in partial payment for his share in the revolt, was taking a turn at shoveling coal in the stifling furnace room.

Gallagher touched his hat humbly.

"We'd like a word with you, Captain Blythe."

"I thought Bothwell was your captain?"

The sailor flushed.

"No, sir. We're through with him."

"Now that he's a prisoner?" suggested Sam.

"We wish we'd never let him bamboozle us, sir. It would 'a' been a sight better for a lot of poor fellows if we'd never seen him. That man's a devil, sir."

"Indeed!"

As he stood there, a lean brown man straight as a ramrod, efficient to the last inch of him, it struck me that the mutineers would get justice rather than mercy from our captain.

The sailor moistened his dry lips and went on.

"Captain Blythe, we—we're sorry we let ourselves be led into—into——"

Gallagher stumbled for a word. Sam supplied it quietly:

"Mutiny."

"Yes, sir; if you want to put it that way, sir."

"How else can I put it?"

"We were led astray by that man Bothwell, sir. He promised there would be no bloodshed. We're sorry, sir."

"I don't doubt it," the Englishman assented dryly.

"Begging your pardon, sir, we asks to be taken back and punished by you. Whatever you give us we'll take and not a word out of our heads. Say a flogging and we'll thank you kindly, sir. But don't turn us over to the law."

"Didn't I tell you what would come of it, Gallagher?"

"Yes, sir; you warned us straight. But that man Bothwell had us bewitched."

"If you're taken ashore at Panama you'll be hanged."

"We know that, sir."

Blythe considered for a minute and announced his decision sharply.

"I'll give you another chance—you two and Higgins and young Fleming. I'll not let you off scot-

free, but your punishment will depend on how faithful you are for the rest of the cruise."

Once I saw a man acquitted of murder in a courtroom. The verdict was such a relief that he fainted. The captain's unexpected clemency took these men the same way, for virtually he had untied the noose from their necks. Tears started to their eyes. Plainly they were shaken with emotion.

"You'll not regret it, sir. We'll be true to the death, Captain Blythe," the Irishman promised, his white lips trembling.

After Alderson's turn at the wheel came mine. Evelyn presently joined me in the pilot-house.

"When shall we get ashore?" she asked me.

We were at the time, I remember, passing Taboga Island.

"Not till morning. We'll have to be inspected. To-night we'll lie in the harbor."

"How is your hand?" she asked, glancing at my bruised fingers.

I flashed a look quickly at her.

"My hand! Oh, it's all right now."

"Jimmie's is better, too," she said quietly.

In the language of my boyhood I was up a stump. So I played for time.

"Jimmie's?"

"Yes. I have been taking care of it for him. His

fingers were not bruised much, though. It's odd, isn't it, that both of you were hurt in exactly the same place—by accident?"

I murmured that it was strange.

"So I had a little talk with him," she went on quietly.

"Yes?"

"And he told me all about it. Oh, Jack, I didn't think even Boris would do a thing like that!" She looked up at me with bright, misty eyes. "I asked Gallagher and Neidlinger about it. They both told me how brave you were."

"I'm grateful for their certificate of valor," I answered lightly.

Before I knew what she was at my sweetheart had stooped to kiss the bruises above my knuckles. I snatched my hand away.

"Don't do that," I said gruffly. "It isn't exactly —you know—right."

"Why not?" She looked at me with head flung back in characteristic fashion. "Why not? They suffered for us, the poor, bruised fingers. Why shouldn't I honor them with my poor best?"

"Oh, well!" I shrugged, embarrassed by her shining ardor, even though in my heart it pleased me.

She came close to me.

"I love you better every day, Jack. You're splendid. Life is going to be a great, big thing for me with you."

"Even though we don't find the treasure?" I asked, thrilling with the joy of her confession.

"We've found the treasure," she whispered. "I don't give that"—she snapped her fingers with a gesture of scorn—"for all the gold that was ever buried compared to you, laddie. I just spend my time thanking God for you with all my heart."

"But you mustn't idealize me. I'm full of faults."

"Don't I know it? Don't I love your faults, too, you goose? Who wants a perfect man?"

"I know, I know."

The wheel was getting very little attention, for my darling was in my arms and I was kissing softly her tumbled hair and the shadows under her glorious eyes.

"Love is like that. It doesn't want perfection. I care more for you because you're always wanting your own way. The tiny, powdered freckles on the side of your nose are beauty marks to me."

"You *are* a goose," she laughed. "But it's true. I've seen lots of handsomer men than you—Boris, for example; but I've never seen one so good looking."

"And that's just nonsense," I told her blithely.

"Of course it's nonsense. But there is no sense so true as nonsense."

I dare say we babbled foolishly the inarticulate rhapsody all lovers find so expressive.

CHAPTER XX

THE BIG DITCH

Darkness had fallen before we dropped anchor in the harbor of Panama. It was such a night as only the tropics can produce, the stars burning close and brilliant, the full moon rising out of a silent sea. In front of us the lights of the city came twinkling out. Behind them lay the mystery of conquest.

No spot in all the western hemisphere held so much of romance as this. Drake and Pizarro had tarried here in their blustering careers, Morgan had captured and burned the city.

Many times in the past centuries the Isthmus had been won and lost, but never had such a victory been gained as that our countrymen had secured in the past half dozen years.

They had overcome yellow fever and proved that the tropics might be made a safe place for the Anglo-Saxon to live. They had driven a sword through the backbone of the continent and had built a canal through which great liners could climb up and down stairs from one ocean to another.

The dream of the centuries had become a reality through the skill and resolution with which the sons of Uncle Sam had tackled the big ditch.

It may be guessed how anxious all of us were to get ashore. There was little sleep aboard the *Argos* that night. It was long past midnight before any of us left the deck.

The truth is that the yacht had become a prison to us just as it had to Bothwell. The thought of a few days on land, where we need not watch every moment to keep our throats from being slit, was an enormous relief.

But Blythe was taking no chances with the vessel. It had been decided among us that either he, Yeager, or I should remain in charge of the *Argos* every minute of our stay.

I had volunteered for the first day and Yeager was to relieve me on the second.

All three of us were firmly resolved, though we had not yet broached the subject to Evelyn, that the ladies should remain in the canal zone while we continued down the coast to lift the treasure.

Before Bothwell was taken ashore he had the effrontery to ask for a talk with his cousin. Blythe did not even submit his request to her. Fleming and he were removed from the vessel while the ladies were eating breakfast with Yeager, so that

they did not even know until afterward that the men had been turned over to the authorities.

None of the reconstructed mutineers asked for shore leave. Each of them knew that if he left the ship he would be liable to arrest for a capital offense and preferred to take his chance of any punishment the captain might inflict.

The day was an endless one, but it wore away at last. The cattleman was to relieve me at breakfast time. I was up with the summer sun and had bathed, shaved, and eaten long before the city showed any sign of activity around the harbor.

"You'll like Panama," Yeager assured me after he had clambered aboard. "It's a city of madmen, plumb daffy about the big ditch. The men can't talk anything but cuts, dams, cubic feet, steam plows, and earth slides. But, by Moses, when I see what they've done it makes me glad I'm an American. Everything is the biggest in the world—the dam, the locks, the cuts, the lake, the machinery, the whole blessed works. They've set a new mark for the rest of the earth."

"What is Sam doing about getting a crew in place of our precious mutineers?" I asked.

"He's picked up several fellows already. A Yankee named Stubbs is chief engineer. Sam is shipping Jamaica niggers for firemen."

No schoolboy out for a holiday could have been half so keen to be free as I was. At the wharf I picked up a *coche* and was driven to the Tivoli, the hotel in the American quarter where our party was staying.

The mud and the mosquitoes of former years were gone, though the natives were as indolent as ever. It is a town of color, due largely to the assorted population. I was told by a young engineer from Gatun that forty languages are spoken on the Isthmus at present, a condition due to the number of Caribbean islanders employed by our government.

I found that the program for the day included a trip to Colon on the Isthmus railroad. Miss Berry preferred to rest quietly at the hotel, so her niece, Sam, and I set out to see the great canal.

As I look back on it now Panama means to me a series of panoramic pictures. To give more than a cursory description of our impressions is impossible. The fact is that one obliterated another so swiftly as to leave a sense only of confusion.

Take Culebra Cut, for instance, where the monsters of man's invention are biting into the mountain sides, ripping down with giant jaws loose dirt, and hauling it away on a maze of tracks.

Great hoses, under tremendous pressure, are tear-

ing at hills and washing them down. All the time there is a deafening noise, the crash of the continent's spine being rent by dynamite, the roar of trains, the shrieks of dirt shovels blowing off steam, the stab and hammer of drills.

Man is making war on nature with amazing energy on a titanic scale. The disorder seemed hopeless, but one realized that these little figures moving about it in the man-made cañon were achieving the seemingly impossible none the less.

"Isn't it wonderful?" Evelyn asked for the tenth time, as we looked down on a machine which had just seized a section of track and hoisted it up, rails and ties complete, to swing it over to another place.

I quoted to her Damon Runyon's verses:

We are ants upon a mountain, but we're leavin' of our dent,
An' our teeth-marks bitin' scenery they will show the way we went;
We're a liftin' half-creation, and we're changin' it around,
Just to suit our playful purpose when we're diggin' in the ground.

"You Americans take the cake," Blythe admitted. "You never tire of doing big things."

His eyes had come back to a group of young engineers who had just entered the car. The grimy sweat had dried on their sooty faces and their

hands were black and greasy. They wore no coats and their shirts, wet from the perspiration drawn by the hot Panama sun, stuck to the muscular shoulders.

They looked like tramps from their attire, but Olympians could not have carried in their manner a blither confidence. These boys—I'll swear the oldest could have been no more than twenty-five—had undertaken to cut asunder what God has joined.

It did not matter to them in the least that they looked like coal miners. The only thing of importance was the work, the big ditch. Yet I knew that these were just such splendid fellows as our technical schools are turning out by thousands.

A few years before their thoughts had been full of cotillions and girls and the junior prom. The Isthmus had laid hold of them and hardened their muscles and bronzed their faces and given them a toughness of fiber that would last a lifetime.

They had taken on responsibility as if they had been born to it. A glow of pride in them flushed me. I was proud of the country that could fling out by hundreds of thousands such young fellows as these.

Empire, Gorgona, Gatun. From one to another we were hurried, passing through jungles such as

we of the North never dream exist. In that humid climate vegetation is prodigal beyond belief, gorgeous with spattered greens and yellows and crimsons bizarre enough to take the breath.

We ate luncheon at Colon and were back across the Isthmus at Panama a few hours later. After dinner we strolled around the city and saw the Parque de la Catedral, the Plaza Santa Ana, and the old sea wall.

It did my heart good to see broad-shouldered, alert young Americans walking with wholesome girls from home and making love to them in the same fashion their friends were doing up in "God's country."

Bothwell and his bunch of pirates began to lose themselves in the background of my mind. There was a dance at the hotel that evening. Before I had waltzed twice with Evelyn her buccaneer cousin had dissolved into a myth.

When Yeager came ashore next morning he brought a piece of news. Henry Fleming had taken a boat during the night and escaped.

"If I run across him I'll curl his hair for him," Tom promised with a look that made me think he would keep his word.

But I was not sorry Fleming had taken French leave. Neidlinger could be trusted now, and

neither Higgins nor Gallagher would go far astray without a leader.

But both the engineers had known of Bothwell's plans from the first. If I could have foreseen what effect the desertion of our second engineer was to have upon the expedition I would not have taken his disappearance so easily.

Our stay on the canal zone was a delightful one, though we were busy every minute of the time enjoying ourselves or making preparations for departure. With some difficulty Blythe picked up two engineers and a couple of firemen from Barbados and Jamaica, the latter of whom were natives. Philips was to stay at Panama until our return.

I had my share of duty aboard the *Argos* to do, but every minute that was my own I spent in the old city or on the works.

Evelyn surprised us by making no objection to our decree that she should remain at Panama while we took the *Argos* down to San Miguel Bay to lift the doubloons. In spite of her courage she was a woman. She confessed to me that she had seen bloodshed enough on the way down from California to last her a lifetime. The thought of returning so soon to the yacht had been a dreadful one to her.

On the afternoon of our last day at Panama,

Evelyn and I went out to the old sea wall for an hour together. The tide was in and from the parapet we watched the waves beat against the foot of the wall.

Away to our right was Balboa, above which rested a smoke pall from tugs, dredges, and tramp west coasters. Taboga we could just make out, and closer in a group of smaller islands the names of which I have forgotten. Beyond them all stretched the endless Pacific.

Evelyn was quieter than usual, but I had never seen her look so lovely. The poise of my dear girl's burnished head, the untutored grace of her delicate youth, the gleam of tears behind the tremulous smile, all made mighty appeal to me.

"I'm afraid for you, Jack. That's the truth of it. We've just found each other—after all these years. I don't want to run the risk of losing you again." Ever so slightly her voice broke.

"You'll not lose me. Do you think anything could keep me away—with the sweetest girl in the world waiting for me here?"

"I know," she smiled, a little drearily. "It sounds foolish, but I think of that dreadful man."

We had been following the cement promenade on top of the wall. I led her across it to the landward side, from which we could look down into

the yard of a prison. Under the eyes of an armed guard some prisoners were crossing to their cells. Two of them were in stripes, the third was not.

"Look," I told her. "Bothwell is down there, locked up and guarded. He can't escape."

The little group below came closer. I had noticed that the prisoner not in uniform was a white man and not a native. He carried himself with a distinction one could not miss. Even before he looked up both of us knew the man was Boris Bothwell.

He stopped in his tracks, white-lipped, a devil of hatred and rage burning out of his deep-set eyes. A dullard could not have missed his thoughts. He was a prisoner in this vile hole, while I had brought the woman he loved to mock at him. The girl and the treasure would both be mine. Before him lay no hope.

I felt a sense of shame at being an unexpected witness of his degradation. As I started to draw Evelyn back a guard prodded the Slav with his bayonet point. Bothwell whirled like a tiger and sprang for the throat of the fellow. They went down together. Other guards rushed to the rescue of their companion.

We waited to see no more.

It must have been a minute before either of us spoke.

"Bad as he is, I can't help being sorry for him. It's as if a splendid lion were being worried to death by a pack of coyotes," Evelyn said with a shudder.

"Yes, there's something big even in his villainy. But you may take one bit of comfort: He can't get free to interfere with us—and he deserves all he'll get."

"I know. My reason tells me that all will be well now, but I have a feeling as if the worst were not yet over."

I tried to joke her out of it.

"It hasn't begun. You're not married to Jack Sedgwick yet."

"No; but, dear, I can't get away from the thought that you are going into danger again," she went on seriously.

"'Tis dangerous to take a cold, to sleep, to drink," I quoted lightly.

"I dare say I'm a goose," she admitted.

"You are. My opinion is that you're in as much danger as we shall be."

"Is that why you are leaving me here?" she flashed back.

I laughed. In truth I did not quite believe what

I had said. For I could see no danger at all that lay in wait for her. But the events proved that I had erred only in not putting the case strongly enough. Before we returned to civilization she was to be in deadly peril.

CHAPTER XXI

A MESSAGE FROM BUCKS

In the forenoon we drew out from the harbor and followed the shore line toward the southwest, bound for that neck of the Isthmus which is known loosely as The Darien.

Before night had fallen we were rounding Brava Point into the Gulf of San Miguel, so named by Balboa because it was upon St. Michael's Day, 1513, that his eyes here first fell upon the blue waters of the Pacific.

We followed the north shore, along precipitous banks that grew higher the farther inland we went. The dense jungle came down to the water's edge and was unbroken by any sign of human habitation.

In the brilliant moonlight we passed the South and the North bays, pushing straight into the Darien Harbor by way of the Boco Chico. The tides here have a rise and fall of nearly twenty feet, but we found a little inlet close to a mangrove swamp that offered a good harborage for the night.

The warm sun was pouring over the hill when

I reached the deck next morning. We were steaming slowly past the village of La Palma along a precipitous shore heavily timbered. One could not have asked a pleasanter trip than that to the head of the harbor, at which point the Rio Tuyra pours its waters into the bay. Between La Palma and the river mouth we did not see a sign of human life.

At the distance of a rifle shot from the head of the harbor we rounded a point and saw before us a long tongue of sand running into the water.

Blythe and I spoke almost together:

"Doubloon Spit."

There could be no mistake about it. We had reached the place where Bully Evans and Nat Quinn had buried the gold ingots they had sold their souls to get. We came to anchor a couple of hundred yards from the end of the sand spit.

Neither Blythe nor I had said a word to any of the crew to indicate that we were near our journey's end, but all morning there had been an unusual excitement aboard. Now we could almost see the word run from man to man that the spot where the treasure was buried lay before us.

"You'll command the shore party to-day, Jack," Blythe announced.

"Do I draw shore duty?" Yeager asked eagerly.

"You do. I'll stay with the ship. Jack, you'll

"CRIKEY! I DIDN'T KNOW THAT WAS THERE," JIMMIE CRIED. p. 240

have with you, too, Alderson, Smith, Gallagher, and one of the stokers."

"Also James A. Garfield Welch," I added.

"Also Jimmie," he nodded.

We had no reason to expect any trouble, but we went ashore armed, with the exception of Gallagher and Barbados, as we called our white-toothed, black-faced fireman.

I had our boat beached at the neck of the peninsula. While the men were drawing it up on the sand beyond reach of the tide I called to Jimmie.

"Yes, Mr. Sedgwick."

"Take off your coat."

"Are youse going to give me that licking now?" he asked, eyes big with surprise.

"How often have I told you not to ask questions? Shuck the coat."

He twisted out of it like an eel. I took it from him, turned it inside out, and opened my pocket knife. Carefully I ripped the lining at the seams. From a kind of pocket I drew an envelope. Out of the envelope I took the map that had been so closely connected with the history of Doubloon Spit.

When I say the men were surprised, I do them less than justice. One could have knocked their eyes off with a stick.

"Crikey! I didn't know that was there," Jimmie cried.

It had been Evelyn's idea to sew the map in Jimmie's coat, since that was the last place the mutineers would think of looking for it. While he had been peacefully sleeping Miss Wallace had done so neat a piece of tailoring that Jimmie did not suspect the garment had been tampered with.

We had, however, taken the precaution to take a copy of the map. During all the desperate fighting it had been lying in a shell snugly fitted into one of the chambers of a revolver in Yeager's room.

"Beg pardon, sir. Did the boy have the map with him while he was Mr. Bothwell's prisoner?" asked Gallagher.

"He did; but he didn't know it."

"Glad he didn't, sir, because if he had that devil would have got it out of him."

"Which no doubt would have distressed you greatly," I answered dryly.

"I'm on the honest side now, sir," the sailor said quietly.

"Let's hope you stay there."

"I intend to, sir," he said, flushing at my words.

The chart that Tom and I looked at was a contour map of the spit and the territory adjacent to it. No doubt it had in the old days been roughly ac-

curate, but now the tongue of sand was wider than it had been by nearly a hundred years of sand deposits washed up by the tide.

Both on the map and the spit a salient feature was the grove of palms that stood on the hill just beyond the neck of the peninsula. Here plainly was the starting point of our quest. With Yeager I led the way to the clump, followed by my men carrying spades and shovels.

"Ye Grove" the clump of palms was labeled, and the great drooping tree to one side some fifty yards farther down the hill must be "Ye Umbrela Tree."

Beneath the map were the directions for finding the treasure, written in the angular hand of Nat Quinn. In order that you may understand I give these just as he had written them.

HOW TO FIND ITTE:

From inlet nearest shore go 200 paces to summit where Grove is. From most eastern palm measure 12 steps to Ye Umbrela Tree and seven beyond. Take a Be line from here thirty paces throu ye Forked Tree. Here cut a Rite Anggel N. N. E. till Tong of Spit is lost. Cast three long steps Souwest to Big Rock and dig on landward side.

(Sined)

BULLY EVANS X (His Mark)

NAT QUINN

While I had been poring over this map and the directions with it in my office at San Francisco it had seemed an easy thing to follow them, but in this dense, tropical jungle I found it quite another matter.

The vegetation and the underbrush were so rank that one found himself buried before he had gone three steps in them.

No doubt at the time when the survivors of the *Mary Ann* of Bristol had cached their ill-gotten doubloons a recent fire had swept this point of land so that they had found no difficulty in traversing it, but now the jungle was so thick and matted that I decided to begin by cutting roads to the palm grove and the umbrella tree.

From the yacht I got hatchets and machetes and we set to work. Before night we all had a tremendous respect for the power of resistance offered by a Panama jungle. We might almost as well have hacked at rubber.

There was none of that sturdy solidity of our northern woods. The jungle yields to every blow and springs back into place with a persistence that seems devilish. By nightfall we had made so little progress that I was discouraged.

To our right there was a mangrove swamp. As we passed its edge on the way back to the boat our

eyes beheld thousands upon thousands of birds coming there to roost for the night. Among them were many aigrette herons, white as the driven snow. I think I have never seen a bird so striking as this one.

Blythe, with Neidlinger, Higgins, our engineers, and the other fireman, took the second day on shore. Morgan was doing the cooking, and so was exempt from service. Dugan, still weak from his wound, was helping in the galley as best as he could.

All through the third day it rained hard, but on the fourth I and my detail were back on the job. We were making progress. By this time a path had been cut through to the palm grove and from it to the umbrella tree.

It was clear that a century ago the line of palms must have stretched farther down the hill, for now the nearest was at least fifty yards from the umbrella tree, instead of twelve as mentioned in the directions.

The only alternative to this was that the original umbrella tree had disappeared, and this I did not want to believe. At best one of the landmarks had gone.

We could go seven paces beyond the big tree, but "beyond" is a vague word, the point from which the measurement began having vanished.

Moreover, we encountered here another difficulty.

"Take a Be line from here thirty paces throu ye Forked Tree," we read on the chart, but the forked tree had apparently fallen and rotted long since. There were trees in the jungle, to be sure, but none of them were of sufficient age to have been in existence then.

The best I could do was to guess at the point seven paces beyond the umbrella tree and, using it as a center, draw a circle around it at thirty paces. Our machetes hacked a trail, and at one point of it we crossed the stump of a tree that had been in its day of some size.

The stump had rotted so that one could kick it to pieces with the heel of a boot. This might or might not be the remains of the forked tree, but since we were working on a chance, this struck us as a good one to try.

It was impossible to tell where the fork had been, but we made a guess at it and proceeded to follow directions.

"Here cut a Rite Anggel N. N. E. till Tong of Spit is lost."

This at least was specific and definite. North northeast we went by the compass, slashing our way through the heavy vines and shrubbery inch

by inch. We dipped over a hillock and came out of the jungle into the sand before the end of the spit was hidden by higher ground.

"Cast three long steps Souwest to Big Rock and dig on landward side."

Three steps to the southwest brought me deeper into the sand. There was no big rock in sight.

I looked at Tom. He laughed, as he had a habit of doing when in a difficulty.

"I guess we'll have to try again, Jack."

Gallagher broke in, touching his hat in apology:

"Not meaning to butt in, Mr. Sedgwick, but mightn't the rock be covered with sand? Give a hundred years and a heap of sand would wash into this cove here."

"There's sense in that. Anyhow, we'll try out your theory, Gallagher."

I marked a space about twelve by twelve upon which to begin operations. It took us an hour and a half to satisfy ourselves that nothing was hidden there.

I marked a second square, a third, and finally a fourth. Dusk fell before we had finished digging the last. Tired and dispirited we pulled back to the yacht.

During the night it came on to rain again, and for three successive days water sluiced down from

skies which never seemed empty of moisture. There was a gleam of sunshine the fourth day and though the jungle was like a shower bath Blythe took his machete and shovel squad to work.

At the end of the day they were back again. Sam had picked on a great *lignum vitæ* as the forked tree named in the chart and had come to disappointment, even as I had.

In the end it was Gallagher who set us right. By this time, of course, every member of our party had the directions on the chart by heart, though several had not read the paper. We had finished luncheon and several of the men were strolling about. I was half way through my cigar when Gallagher came swinging back almost at a run.

"Beg pardon, sir. Would you mind coming with me?"

"What is it?" I asked in some excitement.

"It may not amount to anything. I don't know. But I thought I'd tell you, Mr. Sedgwick."

He had been lying down on the sand where it ran back to the jungle from the farthest inlet. Kicking idly with his heel he had come to solid stone. An examination proved to him that he was lying on a big rock covered with sand.

"You think this is the Big Rock," I said, after I had examined it.

"That's my idea. Stand here, sir, at the edge. You can't see the tongue of the spit, can you?"

"No, but that doesn't prove anything. We can't see it from this inlet at all."

"Sure about that, sir? Take three steps nor'east —long ones. Can you see the point now?"

"No, there's a hillock between."

"Take one step more."

I moved forward another yard. Over the top of the rise I could just see the sand tongue running into the bay.

Jimmie, the irrepressible, broke out impatiently.

"Don't see what he's getting at, Mr. Sedgwick. The map says to take three steps *southwest* to the big rock."

"Exactly, Jimmie, but we're starting *from* the big rock, so we have to reverse directions. By Jove, I believe you've hit on the spot, Gallagher."

I called to Alderson to bring the men with their spades. A tree more than a foot thick at the ground had grown up at the edge of the rock. We brought this down by digging at the roots. After another quarter of an hour's work Barbados unearthed a bottle. He was as proud of his find as if it had been a bar of gold.

We were all excited. The bottle was passed from hand to hand.

"We're getting warm," I cried. "This is the spot. Remember that every mother's son of you shares what we find. Five dollars to the man that first touches treasure."

There was a cheer. The men fell to work with renewed vigor. Presently Gallagher's spade hit something solid. A little scraping showed the top of an iron box.

"I claim that five, sir," cried Gallagher.

I jumped into the hole beside him. With our hands we scraped the dirt away from the sides.

"Heave away," I gave the word.

We lifted the box to the solid ground above. It was very rusty, of a good size, and heavy.

"Let's open it now," cried Jimmie, dancing with enthusiasm.

"Let's not," I vetoed. "We'll take it on board first. Five dollars to the man that finds the second box."

But there was no second box. We worked till dark at the hole. Before we left there was an excavation large enough for the cellar of a house. But not a trace of more treasure did we find.

Blythe had decided it best not to open the treasure before the men, and though the crew was plainly disappointed we stuck to that resolution.

Sam promised the men that they should see it

before we reached San Francisco, and that they should appoint two of their number to accompany the treasure to the assay office in that city to determine the value of our find and their share.

Yeager, being handier with an ax than the rest of us, broke open the lid of the chest. A piece of coarse sacking covered the contents. Blythe lifted this—*and disclosed to our astonished eyes a jumble of stones and sand.*

We looked at our find and at each other. Tom put our feeling into words.

"Bilked, by Moses!"

We tossed the rocks and sand upon the table and came to a piece of ragged paper folded in two. In a faint red four words were traced as if with the end of a pointed stick.

Sold, you devils! BUCKS.

CHAPTER XXII

TREASURE-TROVE

Tom broke the silence again.

"Now will some one tell me who the devil is Bucks?"

It was the question in all our minds and our eyes groped helplessly in those of each other for an answer.

"Bucks! Bucks! I've heard his name somewhere."

Blythe spoke up like a flash.

"So have I, Jack. He was one of the sailors that took the *Santa Theresa.* Quinn gave a list of them in his story. This fellow must have escaped somehow when the ship was blown up."

"Or from the gig that set out to pursue the long boat. Perhaps when the *Truxillo* pounded the boat to pieces he swam to shore," I suggested.

"Yes, but Quinn does not mention that Bucks got ashore. That's funny too, because he says that he was the only man from the *Santa Theresa* left alive after Bully Evans was shot."

"That is queer. But it's plain Bucks *did* escape. Don't you think it might be this way? When he got to shore he ran forward to tell the four who had landed with the treasure about the coming of the *Truxillo*. But before he reached the top of the hill he heard shots and suspected danger. So he stole forward cautiously and saw what had happened to Wall and Lobardi. Of course he wouldn't dare show himself then, for he was probably unarmed. So he kept hidden while the two survivors buried the treasure."

"Of course. Like a wise man too," assented Tom. "And when Quinn and the mate had pulled their freights he steps out and buries the gold in another place."

"Probably he waited till the *Truxillo* was out of the harbor," amended the Englishman.

"Sure. But the big point that sticks out like a sore thumb is that Bucks didn't fool Evans and Quinn, but us. The treasure's gone. That's a rock-bottom fact," Yeager commented.

"I'm not so sure about that," I reflected aloud. "Look here. If Bucks dug the gold up he had to rebury it somewhere. He had no way of taking the doubloons with him. He couldn't have hauled the other boxes far. Therefore, it follows that he buried them close to where he found them. The

one thing we don't know is whether he came back later and got the treasure. I'll bet he didn't. The man was a common sailor and had no means."

"Even if we give you the benefit of every doubt, the treasure is hidden. We don't know where. In a year we might not find it."

"True enough, Sam. And we might stumble on it to-morrow. Look at the facts. He was alone, probably superstitious, certainly in fear lest Bully Evans might return and find him there. More than that, he had no provisions. To get away and reach the Indians to get food would be his main thought. It was a case of life and death with him. So you can bet he chose easy digging when he transferred the treasure. That means he buried it in the sand not far from where he found it."

"You have it figured out beautifully," Sam laughed. "Well, I wish you luck."

"But you don't expect any for me. Just you wait and see."

We called the crew in and showed them what we had found, explaining the facts and our deductions from them. For we thought it better they should know just how matters stood. Their disappointment was keen, but to a man they were eager to search further.

Hitherto we had staked our chances for suc-

cess upon the map, but it was now manifest that the chart was no longer of any use. I decided first to take a look along the shore from the point where we had discovered the first box.

Fortune is a fickle jade. We had spent a week here and met only disappointment, working on careful calculations made from the directions left by Quinn. By chance Gallagher had hit on the first cache. By chance I hit on the second.

Fighting my way through the jungle just adjacent to the beach I stumbled over what I took to be a root. In some annoyance I glanced hastily at the projection—and then looked again. My foot had been caught by a bone sticking out of the ground. The odd thing was that it looked like a human bone.

I plied my machete. Within a quarter of an hour I had cleared a small square of ground and was digging with a pick. What I presently uncovered were the remains of a skeleton. An old sack, more brittle than paper, lay beneath these. This I removed. There, lying in the sand, were *three bars of gold.*

My heart jumped, lost a beat, hammered furiously. I looked around quickly. Alderson and Gallagher were the only men I had brought ashore with me. They were digging at haphazard in the

sand a hundred yards away. With one stroke of the pick I upended several more yellow bars.

That was enough for me. I laid aside the first three and covered the others with sand, using my foot as a spade. The three original bars I buttoned under my coat and then walked down hill to the beach.

"I'm going aboard," I told the men.

"Gallagher, you may row me out. I'll be back presently, Alderson."

I was under a tremendous suppressed excitement. Blythe met me as I came aboard and his eyes questioned mine. Without a word we moved toward the bridge pavilion and down into the saloon.

"I've had another message from Mr. Bucks," I told him.

"The deuce you say!"

"He delivered it in person this time."

The Englishman's eyes danced, but otherwise his face was immobile.

"Did he say his name was Bucks?"

"No. I'm not dead sure I have him identified correctly. As Tom would say, the brand is worn out."

"I never was any good at riddles," he admitted.

"I stumbled over a thigh bone in the jungle. It

was sticking out of the ground, where in the course of time the sand had buried the rest of the body. I have reason to think it belonged to Bucks because——"

I paused for dramatic effect, my arms folded across my chest to keep the treasure from slipping down.

"Just so, because——?"

He was as cool as an iced melon, the drawl in his voice not quickening in the least. But his eyes gave away his tense interest.

"Why, because I found a lot of these in the sand, all of them measuring up to sample." From under my coat I drew the shining yellow bars and handed them to him.

"Gold!" he cried softly. "By Jove, this is a find."

"And a lot more where those came from, or I miss my guess. There is a mound there that looks to me like a cache."

"But what was Bucks doing there?"

"That's a guess. Here is mine. It doesn't cost you a cent even if you don't accept it. After he had made the cache we'll say that he hiked off to try to find a settlement. Very likely he had no idea where to look and he found progress through the jungle impossible. After a while he wandered

back, half starved and exhausted. Perhaps his idea may have been that the *Truxillo* was still on the ground. If so, he may have wanted to offer the gold in exchange for his life. Anyhow, back he comes, to find that he is too late. The brig has gone. In his delirium he has some notion of digging up the treasure to buy food. He gets the first sack of bullion up and then quits, too weak to do any more."

"Sounds reasonable enough. The chief point is that you've found the gold. I'll order a force ashore to help you."

There is something in the very thought of treasure-trove that unsettles the most sane. Not a word was said to anybody except Tom about what I had found, but everybody on board was sure the bullion had been found.

Before the eyes of each man danced shining yellow ingots and pieces of eight. We could tell it by the eagerness with which they volunteered for shore duty.

I chose Yeager, the chief engineer—he was a lank Yankee named Stubbs—and Jamaica Ginger, as we called our second fireman. With us we took ashore a stout box, in which to pack the loose gold.

Those left on board cheered us as we pulled toward the beach, and we answered lustily their

cheer. Every man jack of us was in the best of spirits.

By this time it was late in the afternoon, but the sun was still very hot. I was careful not to let anybody work long at a stretch. As the bars of gold were uncovered we packed them in the box brought for the purpose. Every time a shovel disclosed a new find there was fresh jubilation.

While Alderson and I were resting under the shade of a mangrove the sailor made a suggestion.

"You don't expect to get all the treasure out to-night, do you, sir?"

"No. Perhaps not by to-morrow night. It is hard digging among so many roots. And Mr. Bucks does not seem to have put it all together."

"Will you keep a guard here, Mr. Sedgwick?"

"Yes. It looks like a deserted neck of the woods, but we'll take no chances."

"That is what I was thinking, sir. Last night I couldn't sleep for the heat and I strung a hammock on deck. About three o'clock this morning a boat passed on its way to the mouth of the river."

"Cholo Indians, likely."

"No, sir. This was a schooner. It was some distance away, but I could make that out."

"Well, we'll keep this place under our eye till the treasure is lifted."

About sunset I sent Gallagher, Stubbs, and Jamaica Ginger aboard with the box of treasure, the Arizonian being in charge of the boat. While I waited for its return I took a turn up the beach to catch the light breeze that was beginning to stir.

I walked toward the head of the harbor, strolling farther in that direction than any of us had yet gone. I went possibly an eighth of a mile above the spit, carrying my hat in my hand and moving in a leisurely way.

In truth I was at peace with the world. We had succeeded in our quest and found the treasure. In a few days at most I should be back at Panama with my slim sweetheart in my arms. What more could rational man ask?

Then I stopped in my stride, snatched into a sudden amazement. For there before me in the sand was the imprint of a boot made since the tide went out a few hours earlier in the day.

No flat-footed Indian had left the track. It was too sharp, too decisive, had been left plainly by a shoe of superior make.

No guess of the truth came to me, but instinctively I eased the revolver in the scabbard by my side. Of this much I was sure, that whereas I had supposed no white man except those of our party

to be within many miles, there was at least one in the immediate vicinity.

What, then, was he doing here? How had he come? Had he any intimation that there was treasure to be found? It was altogether likely that whoever this man was he had not come to this desolate spot without companions and without a very definite purpose.

Where were they, then? And how did it happen we had not seen them? The very secrecy of their presence seemed to suggest a sinister purpose.

Should I go on and follow the tracks. Or should I go back and notify Blythe at once? The latter no doubt would be the wiser course, but my impulse was to push forward and discover something more definite. As luck would have it, the decision was taken out of my hands.

Out of the jungle a man came straight toward me. The very sight of that strong, erect figure moving swiftly with easy stride tied, as it were, a stone to my heart. The man was Boris Bothwell. I was sure of it long before his face was distinguishable.

He waved a hand at me with debonair insouciance.

I waited for him without moving, my fingers on the butt of the revolver at my side.

"So happy to meet you again, dear friend," he jeered as soon as he was within hail.

"What are you doing here? How did you get out?" I demanded.

"My simple-minded youth, money goes a long way among the natives. I bought my way out, since you are curious to know."

"And you've followed us down here to make more trouble?"

"To renew our little private war. How did you guess it?"

"So you haven't had enough yet. You have come back to take another licking."

"It's a long lane that has no turning," he assured me gaily. "I give you my word that I've reached the bend, Mr. Sedgwick."

His confident audacity got on my nerves. On the surface we had all the best of the game. The trouble was that he knew the cards I held, whereas I could only guess at his.

"You are the most unmitigated villain not yet hanged!" I cried in rage.

He bowed, rakish and smiling, with all the airs of a dancing master.

"I fear you flatter me, sir."

"I warn you to keep your hands off. We're ready for you."

"I thought it only fair to warn *you*. That is why I am here and have the pleasure of talking with you."

"More lies. You showed yourself only because you knew I had seen your footprints."

He gave up the point with an easy laugh.

"But really I did want to talk with you. We have many interests in common. Our taste in women, for instance. By the way, did you leave Evie well?"

Triumph swam in the eyes, narrowed to slits, through which he watched me. I could not understand his derisive confidence.

"We'll not discuss that," I told him bluntly.

"As you say. I come to another common interest—the treasure. Is it running up to our hopes?"

So he knew that we had found it. No doubt he had been watching us all day through the telescope that hung at his side.

"We don't recognize any hopes you may have."

"But why not face facts? I intend to own the treasure when you have dug it up for me."

"You're of a sanguine temperament."

"Poof! Life is a game of cards. First you hold trumps, then they fall to me. It chances that now I hold the whip and ride on the crest of for-

tune's wave. Hope you don't mind mixed figures."

"You'll ride at the end of the hangman's rope," I prophesied.

"Let us look on the bright side."

"I'm trying to do that."

The man knew something that I did not. I was not bandying repartee with him for pleasure, but because I knew that if he talked long enough he would drop the card hidden up his sleeve.

What was his ace of trumps? How could he afford to sit back and let us dig up the gold? He could not be merely bluffing, for the man had been laughing at me from that first wave of the hand.

"It is unfortunate that you and I don't pull together, Mr. Sedgwick. We'd make an invincible team. You're the best enemy I ever met."

"And you're the worst I've met."

"Same thing, I assure you. We both mean compliments. But what I want to say is that it is against the law of conservation of energy for us to be opposing each other. I propose combination instead of competition."

"Be a little more definite, please."

"Chuck your friends overboard and go into partnership with me."

"Are you speaking literally, or in metaphor, captain?"

He shrugged.

"That's a mere detail. If you have compunctions we'll maroon them."

"Just what you promised the crew last time," I scored.

"Wharf rats!" He waved the point aside magnificently. "I'm proposing now a gentleman's agreement."

"Which you'll keep as long as it suits you."

"I thought you knew me better."

"What have you to offer? My friends and I can keep the treasure. Why should I ditch them for you? What's the *quid pro quo?*

"You and Evie and I will go shares, third and third alike. The better man of us two will marry her. If it should be you, that will give you two-thirds."

"You're very generous."

"Oh, I intend to marry her if I can. But I'll play fair. If she has the bad taste to prefer you——"

"In the event that I should happen to be alive still," I amended. "You know how dangerous yellow fever is in the Isthmus, captain. I am afraid

that it would get me before we reached the canal zone again."

He chuckled.

"If you have a fault, my friend, it lies on the side of suspicion. When I give my word I keep it—that is, when I give it to a gentleman."

"I don't want to lead you into the temptation of revising your opinion of me and deciding that I am no gentleman."

"Come, Mr. Sedgwick. We're not two fishwives to split hairs over a trifle. I offer a compromise. Do you accept it?"

"You offer me nothing I haven't got already. A share of the treasure—that will be mine, anyhow, as soon as we have it assayed and weighed.

"You forget Evie."

"Who is safe at Panama, beyond your reach, you scoundrel. Why should I fear you as a rival since your life is forfeit as soon as you show your head?"

He could not have spoken more insolently himself. It was hot shot, but I poured it in for a purpose. The mask fell from his face. One could see the devil in his eyes now.

"You reject my offer," he said, breathing hard to repress his rising passion.

A second man had come out of the jungle and

was moving toward us. It was time to be going. I moved back a step or two, my fingers caressing the butt of a revolver.

"Yes, since I don't want to commit suicide, captain."

He suddenly lost his temper completely and hopelessly. He glared at me in a speechless rage, half of a mind to fight our quarrel out on the spot. But the advantage lay with me. All I had to do to blaze away was to tilt the point of my revolver at him without drawing it from the scabbard. Then words came, poured out of him in a torrent. He cursed me in Russian, in French, in English.

I backed from him, step by step, till I was out of range. Then, swiftly as his rage had swept upon him it died away, leaving him white and shaken. He leaned heavily upon the man who had now joined him.

Unless I was much mistaken the man was George Fleming.

CHAPTER XXIII

ABOARD THE SCHOONER

Dignity be hanged! I scudded down the beach as fast as my legs would carry me. Alderson had been left alone at the cache and my heart was in my throat.

When I saw him strolling about with his hands in his pockets I could have shouted for joy if I had had the breath. For I had half expected to find him dead.

He came forward quickly to meet me.

"A tug rounded the bend five minutes since and stopped at the yacht, Mr. Sedgwick," he told me.

I looked out into the bay. A boat was just leaving the *Argos* for the shore. At the point where the sailors presently beached it I was waiting. Blythe jumped out and splashed through the shallow water to meet me. From the look on his face it was clear that something had gone wrong.

Taking me by the arm he led me a few yards along the sand.

"Bad news, Jack."

"What is it?"

"Miss Wallace was waylaid and kidnaped four days ago while she and her aunt were driving."

"How do you know?"

"Miss Berry sent Philips down in a tug to let us know. But that is not the worst. The day before the kidnaping Bothwell escaped from prison. It is thought that his guards were bribed."

I saw in a flash the cause of the Slav's gloating triumph. Evelyn was his prisoner. He had her safely hidden somewhere in the mangrove swamps.

We might dig the treasure up, but we would have to give him every cent of it in ransom for her. That was his plan, and in it lay the elements of success. For Blythe and Yeager, no more than I, would weigh gold against her safety.

We knew Bothwell. His civilization was a veneer. Disappointed of the wealth he had come seeking, the man would revenge himself on the girl who had stood in his way. I dared not think of the shame and degradation he would make her suffer.

I told Blythe of my meeting with Bothwell.

My face must have been ashen, for Sam put a hand on my shoulder.

"Keep a stiff upper lip, old chap. Bothwell won't

hurt her until he is pushed to it. Before that time comes we'll take care of her."

"That's easy saying. But how? That prince of devils has her back there in the swamps guarded by his ruffians. We don't know where they are. This very minute she may be—— My God, think of the danger she runs!"

Blythe shook his head.

"She's safe till Bothwell gives the word. Not one of his fellows would dare lift a hand against her. The captain would shoot him like a dog."

"And Bothwell himself?"

"She's safe yet, Jack. He's playing for the treasure and to marry her, too. The man is not such a fool as to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. The hour of danger for her would be the one when he found out that he had lost the treasure."

"Let's give it to him. I'll go tell him he may have it all."

"Easy, lad, easy. We must play our cards and not throw the hand down. We must get hold of the treasure before we can make terms."

"And let Evelyn stay in his hands without making an effort to free her?" I demanded.

"Did I say that, Jack?"

"What are you going to do, then?"

"As soon as night falls we'll send a boat up the river to find out where his camp is. We'll make a reconnaissance."

"I'll go."

"Don't you think somebody less impetuous would be better, Jack? We don't want to spoil things by any premature attack."

"I'm going, Sam. That's all there is to say about that."

"All right. If you are, you are. But you'd better let me."

"You may come along if you like."

"No, if you go I'll have to stay by the ship against a possible attack. Tom will have charge of the party that watches the treasure. The deuce of it is that our force will be divided into three. I hope Bothwell does not take the occasion to make mischief."

Within the hour the tug that had brought Philips steamed back down the harbor on the return trip to Panama. With it we sent Jimmie and the steward. Dugan flatly declined to go, and since his wound was almost healed the captain let him stay.

This left us fourteen men, counting the former mutineers and the native stokers. To go with me on my night expedition I chose Alderson and

Smith. The guard for the treasure cache consisted of Yeager, Gallagher, Barbados and Stubbs. The rest were to remain with the ship.

The tide was coming in when we pulled from the *Argos* toward the mouth of the Tuyra. The wash of the waves made it unnecessary for us to take any precautions to muffle the sound of our oars and the darkness of the night made detection at any distance improbable.

One difficulty we did encounter. For the first few hundred yards of our journey up the river we disturbed some of the numberless birds which had settled for the night on the trees close to the banks. The flapping of their wings gave notice of our approach as plainly as if a herald had shouted it.

We carried no light. The heavy tropical jungle growth on the mud flats which extended on both sides of the river helped to increase the darkness. Our progress was slow, for we had to make sure that we did not slip past without noticing the schooner that had brought the pirates down from Panama.

The sound of voices on the water warned us that we were approaching the boat of which we were in search. Very cautiously, keeping close to the bushes along the shore, we drew near the

schooner which began to take dim shape in the darkness.

The tide was still strong, and it carried our boat across the bow of the schooner. The anchor chain was hanging and served to hold us in place, though with each lift of the tide I was afraid those on board would hear us grind against her side. Intermittently the voices came to us, though we could make out no words.

We were in a good deal of danger, for any minute one of the crew might saunter to the side of the vessel and look over. It was plain to me that we could not stay here. Either we must go forward or back.

Now back I would not go without finding whether Evelyn was here, and to try to board the schooner in attack would be sheer madness. My mind caught at a compromise.

I whispered to Alderson directions, and when the jibboom of the schooner came down with the next recession of a wave I swung myself to it by means of the chain, using the stays to brace my foot.

Here I lay for a minute getting my bearings, while the sailors in the boat below backed quietly out of sight among the shore bushes that overhung the banks.

So far as I could see the deck was deserted. Carefully I edged on to the bowsprit, crept along it, and let myself down gently to the deck. I could see now that men were lying asleep at the other end of the vessel.

One was standing with his back toward me beside the mizzen-mast. From his clothes I guessed the watch to be a native.

The voices that had come to us across the water still sounded, but more faintly than before I had come on board. Evidently they were from below.

Probably the speakers were in a cabin with the porthole open. I could not be sure, but it struck me that one of them was a woman. My impression was that she pleaded and that he threatened, for occasionally the heavier voice was raised impatiently.

From its scabbard I drew my revolver and crept forward in the shadow of the bulwarks. My life hung on a hair; so too did that of the watchman drowsing by the mast. If he looked up and turned I was lost, and so was he.

Foot by foot I stole toward the forecastle ladder, reached it, and noiselessly passed down the stairs.

I say noiselessly, yet I could hear my heart beat against my ribs as I descended. For I knew now

that the voices which came from behind the closed door of the cabin to my right belonged to my sweetheart and to Boris Bothwell.

"Not I, but you," he was saying. "I'm hanged if I take the responsibility. If you had trusted me we might have lifted the gold without the loss of a drop of blood."

"You are so worthy of trust!" Evelyn's voice answered with bitterness.

"Have you ever known me to break my word? But let that pass. You chose to reject my love and invite that meddler Sedgwick into our affairs. What is the result? What have you gained?"

"A knowledge of the difference between the love of a true man and that of a false one," she answered quietly.

"A true man! Oh, call him a fool and be done with it."

"Perhaps, but I could love such folly."

He seemed to strangle his irritation in his throat.

"A lot of good it will do! You belong to me. That is written in the book of your life, and what is to be will be. And I'll get the treasure, too."

"Never! You call them fools, but they have outwitted you from start to finish."

"They've pulled the chestnuts out of the fire for me, if that is what you mean."

"And as for me, I'm only a girl, but I swear before Heaven I'd rather sink a knife into my heart than give myself to you."

He clapped his hands ironically with a deep laugh like the bay of a wolf.

"Bravo! Well done! You'd make a fortune in tragedy, Evie. But dramatics apart, you may make up your mind to it. I'm your master, and before twenty-four hours shall be your mate. Why else have I brought this broken wretch of a priest along, but to tie the knot in legal fashion? I'm a reasonable man. Since you have a taste for the conventional and decorum you shall have them. But priest or no priest, willy nilly, mine you are and shall be."

"You think everybody is a fool but yourself. Can't I see why you want the marriage? It's not to please me, but through me to give you a legal claim on the treasure."

"Why do you always stir up the devil in me? I love you. I want to please you. I'll treat you right if you'll let me."

"Then send me back to the yacht, Boris. I'll give my word to divide the treasure with you. My friends will do as I say. You don't want to break my heart, do you? Think of all the dreadful murder that has been done by you."

"Not by me, but by you and your friends. I

offered to compromise and you would not. Now it is too late. No, by God! I'll play the game out to a fighting finish."

She gave a sobbing little cry.

"Have you no heart?"

His voice fell a note. He moved close to her.

"*Cherie,* you have stolen it and hold it fast in this little palm I kiss!"

By the sounds from within she must have struggled in vain. I told myself:

"Not yet, not yet!"

"In such fashion my ancestor Bothwell wooed Mary Queen of Scots. Fain she would, but dare not. She knew he was a man and a lover out of ten thousand, and though her heart beat fast for him she was afraid. She fled, and he followed. For he was a lover not to be denied, though a king must die to clear the road. So it is with Boris, my queen."

"You mean——?"

The catch in her voice told me she breathed fast.

He laughed, with that soft boisterousness that marked his merriment.

"Your mad Irishman is no king, but he has crossed my path enough. Next time he dies."

"Because he has tried to serve me!"

"Because he is in my way. Reason enough for me."

The door knob was in my hand. All I had to do was to open it and shoot the man dead. But what after that? His men would swarm down and murder me before the eyes of my love. And she would be left alone with a pack of wolves which had already tasted blood.

It was the hardest ordeal of my life to keep quiet while the fellow pressed his hateful suit, pushed it with the passionate ardor of the Slav, regardless of her tears, her despair, and her helplessness.

For an hour—to make a guess at the time—she fought with all the weapons a woman has at command, fending him off as best she could with tears and sighs and entreaties.

Then I heard a man stumbling down the ladder and moved aside. If he should turn my way I was a dead man, for he must come plump against me. He knocked on the door of the cabin.

Bothwell opened and whispered with him a moment, then excused himself to his cousin, locked the door, and followed the sailor up to the deck.

I unlocked the door softly and walked into the cabin. By the dim light of a hanging lantern I made out a rough room furnished only with two

bunks, one above the other, a deal table, and two cheap chairs.

Evelyn had not heard me enter. She was standing with her back to me, leaning against the woodwork of the bed, her face buried in one arm. Despair and weariness showed in every line of the slight, drooping figure.

She must have heard me as I moved. She turned, the deep shadowy eyes gleaming with fear. Never have I seen the soul's terror more vividly flung to the surface.

I suppose that for a moment she could not believe that it was I, and not Bothwell. Perhaps she thought the ghost of me had come to say farewell to her.

She stared at me out of a face from which the color was gone, the great eyes dilating as the truth came home to her. From her throat broke a startled, stifled little cry.

"You!"

I took her in my arms and her tired body came to me. The sensitive mouth trembled, the eyes closed, a shiver of relief passed through her. She clung to me as a frightened child does to its mother, burying her soft cheeks on my shoulder.

Then came sobs. The figure of my love rocked. The horror of what she had been through engulfed

her as she told me her story in broken words, in convulsive shivers, in silence so poignant that they stabbed my heart like a needle.

It was such a tale as no girl should have to tell, least of all to the man she loves. But I had come in time—I had come in time. The knowledge of that warmed me like champagne.

I whispered love to her as I kissed in a passion of tenderness the golden hair, the convolutions of the pink ears, the shadows beneath the sad, tired eyes.

"Tell me, how did you come?" she begged.

I told her, in the fewest possible words, for it might be that our time was brief. Briefly I outlined a plan for her rescue.

I would send Alderson and Smith back for aid and would hide somewhere in the vessel during their absence, to be ready in case she needed help.

When Blythe arrived I would join her and barricade the cabin to protect her until our friends had won the ship.

"But if he should find you before——"

I said then what any man with the red blood of youth still running strong in his veins would say to the woman he loves when she is in peril. Let it cost me what it would I was going to free her from these wolves.

Her deep eyes, soft with love, aglow with an adorable trust, met mine for a long instant.

"Do as you will, dear. But go now—before any one comes. And—God with us, Jack!"

Her arm slid round my neck, she drew my face down to hers, and kissed me with a passion that I had not known was in her.

"Remember, Jack—if I never see you again—no matter what happens—I love you, dearest, for ever and ever."

She whispered it brokenly, then pushed me from her toward the door.

The last glimpse I had of her she was standing there in the shadows, like a divine incarnation of love, her eyes raining upon me the soft light that is the sweetest glimpse of heaven given to a man in this storm-battered world.

CHAPTER XXIV

A RAT IN A TRAP

I groped my way forward in the darkness till I came to a room used for storing purposes. Well up near the beams was a port-hole. Too high for me to reach, I presently found a large box which I upended cautiously until it lay beneath the port. Standing on this I could look through into the heavy foliage of the bushes projecting from the shore.

Except for the lapping of the waves the night was very still. The moon rode low in the sky. A fan-shaped wedge of light silvered the inky river.

I gave the signal agreed upon between me and my men, but no answering flash of white replied to the wave of my handkerchief. Again I shook the piece of linen from the porthole, and at intervals for fully five minutes.

Did Alderson see me? Or was there a reason why he could not answer? It was impossible they could have been captured without some sound having reached me. Nor was it more likely that they had deserted their post.

The bushes stirred at last and the bow of a boat pushed through. Smith stood up so that his face was just below mine. His finger was on his lips.

"Couldn't come any sooner, sir. Captain Bothwell was leaning over the rail smoking a cigarette. I wonder he didn't see your handkerchief," he whispered.

I gave him orders concisely and the men backed the boat till the bushes hid them. For me there was nothing left to do but wait. How long it might be before Blythe would get back with a rescue party I could not tell. The men in the boat would not dare to stir from their hiding-place until the moon went under a cloud.

The tide must now be at the full, so that it would be running out strong before they got started. This would carry them swiftly back to the bay.

I found myself giving my friends two hours as a minimum before they could return to me. At the worst they should be here within four, unless my messenger met with bad luck.

But what about Bothwell? Would he force my hand before Blythe arrived? I thought it very likely. There is something in the tropical air that calls to the passion of a man, and reduces his sense of law till restraint ebbs away.

In Bothwell's case desire and interest went to-

gether. He was a criminal on more than one count, but the charges against him would in a measure fall to the ground if he could drive Evie to marry him.

Once she was his wife the kidnaping charge would not stick, and even his black record on the *Argos* could be made to appear the chivalry of a high-minded man saving the woman he loved from her enemies.

Moreover, his claim to the treasure would then be a valid one. The man was no fool. What he did must be done quickly. There lay before him one safe road. Since that was the path he desired above all things to follow, it was sure he would set out on it without delay.

Her scruples had hitherto held him back, because it would be better she should come of her own accord to him. But these could not hold him many hours longer.

The masterful insistence of the man had told me that, but no more plainly than his mounting passion.

I sat down on the box and waited. In that dark, stuffy hole the heat was intense. The odor of food decomposing in the moisture of the tropics did not add to my comfort.

Sitting in cushioned chairs in club rooms with

a surfeit of comfort within reach, men have argued in my presence that there is no such thing as luck. Men win because of merit; they fail only if there is some lack in themselves.

This is a pleasant gospel for those who have found success, but it does not happen to be true. Take my own case here. How could I foresee that a barefooted, half-naked black cook would come into the storeroom to get a pan of rice for next day's dinner?

Or, as I lay crouched beside a box in the shadows beyond the dim circle illumined by his candle, how could I know whether it were best to announce myself or lie still?

I submit that the part of wisdom was to let the fellow go in peace, and this I did.

But as he turned the light for an instant swept across me. He gave a shriek and flung away both the candle and the pan of rice, bolting for the door. I called to him to stop. For answer he slammed the door—*and locked it.* Nor did my calls stay the slap of his retreating feet. I was caught fast as a rat in a trap.

I certainly had spilt the fat into the fire this time. Inside of five minutes the passage outside was full of men. But during that time I had been

an active Irishman. In front of me and around me I had piled a barrier of boxes and barrels.

"Who's in there?" Bothwell called.

I fired through the door. Some one groaned. There was a sudden scurry of retreating footsteps, followed by whisperings at the end of the passage. These became imperative, rose and fell abruptly, so that I judged there was a division of counsel.

Presently Bothwell raised his voice and spoke again.

"We've got you, whoever you are. My friend, you'll have a sick time of it if you don't surrender without any more trouble. Do you hear me?"

He waited for an answer, and got none. I had him guessing, for it was impossible to know how many of us might be there. Moreover, there was a chance of working upon the superstition of the natives among the crew. The cook had very likely reported that he had seen a ghost.

Except a shot out of the darkness no sound had come from me since. So long as I kept silent the terror of the mystery would remain. Was I man or devil? What was it spitting death at them from the black room?

"We're going to batter that door down," went on Bothwell, "and then we're going to make you wish you'd never been born."

The voices fell again to a whispered murmur. Soon there would be a rush and the door would be torn from its hinges. I made up my mind to get Bothwell if I could before the end.

Above the mutterings came clearly a frightened soprano.

"What is it, Boris? What are you going to do?"

Evelyn had come out of her room to try to save me.

"Just getting ready to massacre your friend," her cousin answered promptly.

"Mr. Sedgwick?"

Terror shook in the voice that died in her throat.

Bothwell bayed deep laughter.

"O-ho! My friend from Erin once more—for the last time. Come out and meet your welcome, Sedgwick."

"Suppose you come and take me," I suggested.

"By God, I will! Back with you into that room, girl."

A door slammed and a key turned.

Still the rush did not come. I waited, nerves strung to the highest pitch. One could have counted sixty in the dead silence.

I knew that some devilish plan had come to the man and that he was working out the details of it in his mind.

"Say the word, Cap," Fleming called to him impatiently.

"Not just yet, my worthy George. We'll give the meddler an hour to say his prayers. But I'm all for action. Since it isn't to be a funeral just yet, what do you say to a marriage?"

"I don't take you."

"Hm! Hold this passage for a few minutes, George. You'll see what you'll see."

A key turned in a lock. When I heard his voice again the man had stepped inside the cabin used by Evelyn. It lay just back of the storeroom and the portholes of the two rooms were not six feet apart. Every word that was said came clearly to me.

"So you thought you'd trick me, my dear—thought you'd play a smooth trick on your trusting cousin. Fie, Evie!"

"What are you going to do to Mr. Sedgwick?" she demanded.

"There's been some smooth work somewhere. I grant you that. How the devil did he get aboard here? He didn't come alone. If he did, what has become of the boat? Speak up, *m'amie.*"

"Do you think I'd tell you even if I knew?" she asked scornfully.

He laughed softly, with diabolical enjoyment.

"I think you would—and will. I have ways to force open closed mouths, beloved."

"You would—torture me?"

"If it were necessary," he admitted coolly.

She answered in a blaze of defiance.

"Get out your iron cubes for my fingers, you black-hearted villain!"

"Not for your soft fingers, *ma cherie*. I kiss them one by one as a lover should. Shall we say for your friend's fingers? If you won't talk, perhaps he will."

"Are you all tiger, Boris? Isn't there somewhere in your heart a spark of manhood?" she sobbed, her spirit melted at my danger.

"Rhetorical questions, Evie. Shall we come to business? How did your soon-to-be-deceased lover come on board? Who brought him? What were his plans?"

"If I tell you, will you spare him?" she begged.

"I'll promise this," he assured her maliciously. "If you don't tell I'll not spare him."

She told all she knew except my plan of rescue. As soon as she mentioned the boat in which I had come the fellow hurried up on deck to intercept it.

I could hear a boat scraping against the side of the schooner as it was being lowered. Fleming and

two others got in and paddled back and forth among the bushes. They found nothing.

My friends had managed to slip away unseen and were headed for the *Argos*. You may believe that I wished them a safe and speedy voyage.

Bothwell came down the forecastle ladder swearing. He went straight to Evelyn. Before he opened the door he was all suavity once more.

"They've got away this time. Just as well perhaps. We'll be able to concentrate our attention on the wedding festivities. Can you be ready in half an hour, dear heart?"

"Ready for what?" The words choked in her throat.

"To make your lover a happy man. This is our wedding night, my dear."

"Never! I'd rather lie at the bottom of the bay. I wouldn't marry you to save my life."

"H-m! You exaggerate, as is the manner of your charming sex. Now I'll wager that you'd marry me to save—why, to save even that meddling Irishman who is listening to our talk."

She strangled a little cry of despair.

"Why do you hate him so? Is it because he is so much better and braver than you?"

"I don't hate him. He annoys me. So I step on him, just as I do on this spider."

"Don't, Boris. I'll give you all my share of the treasure. I'll forgive you everything you've done. I'll see that you're not prosecuted. Be merciful for once."

"Don't get hysterical, Evie. Sedgwick understands he has got to pay. He took a fighting chance and he has lost. It's all in the game." The villain must have looked at his watch, and then yawned. "Past 10:30. Excuse me for a half hour while I settle your friend's hash. Afterward I'll be back with the priest."

"No—no! I won't have it. Boris, if you ever loved me—Oh, God in heaven, help me now!"

I think that in her wild despair she had flung herself on her knees in front of him. Her voice shook, broke almost into a scream.

"Are these—dramatics—for yourself or for him?" Bothwell asked with a sneer.

"Don't kill him! Don't! I'll do whatever you say."

"Will you marry me—at once—to-night?"

I spoke up from the porthole where I was listening.

"No, she won't, you scoundrel! As for me, I'd advise you to catch your hare before you cook it."

"I'm on my way to catch it now, dear Sedg-

wick, just as soon as I break away from the lady," he called back insolently.

"I'll—marry you." The words came from a parched throat.

"To-night," he demanded.

"Not to-night," she begged. "When we get back to Panama."

"No. I'm not going to give you a chance to welch. Now—here—on this schooner."

"Not to-night. I'm so—weary and—unstrung. I'll do whatever you say, but—give me time to—to—Oh, I'm afraid!"

"Bothwell, you cur, come in here and you and I will see this out to a finish!" I cried in helpless fury.

"Presently, my dear Sedgwick. I'll be there soon enough, and that's a promise. But ladies first. You wouldn't have me delay my wedding, would you?"

I flung myself against the door repeatedly and tried to beat it down, but my rage was useless. The lock and the hinges held. Back I went to my porthole.

"Evelyn, are you there?"

"Yes," came the answer in a choked voice.

"Don't do it. What are you thinking of? I'd

rather die a hundred deaths than have you marry him."

"I must, Jack. If you should be killed—and I could have prevented it—— Oh, don't you see I must?"

The words were wrung from her in a cry, as if she had been a tortured child.

"Of course she must. But why make a tragedy of it? By Heaven, you wound my vanity between the pair of you. Am I not straight—as good a man as my neighbor—still young? Come, let us make an end of the heavy-villain-and-hero business. You, my dear Sedgwick, shall stand up and give the bride away. That is to say, you shall stand at your porthole. You'll find rice in a sack to scatter if you will. We want you to enjoy yourself. Don't we, Evie?" Bothwell jeered blithely.

"You devil from hell!"

"Pooh! Be reasonable, man. We can't both marry the maid, and by your leave I think the best man wins. Abrupt I may be, but every *Katherine* is the better for her *Petruchio*." He turned to her, dropping his irony for tones of curt command. "I'll be back in twenty minutes with the parson. Be ready then."

With that he turned on his heel and left, locking the door behind him.

CHAPTER XXV

A RESCUE

Even now when it is only a memory I do not like to look back upon that twenty minutes. My poor girl was hysterical, but decided. Neither argument nor entreaty could move her from her resolution to save my life, no matter what the cost. I pleaded in vain.

"I can't let you die, Jack—I can't—I can't." So she answered all my appeals, with a kind of hopeless despair that went straight to my heart.

Through my remonstrances there broke a high-pitched voice jabbering something in Spanish of a sort. The sound of running footsteps on the deck above came to us. Some one called a warning.

"Keep back there or we'll fire!"

Then my heart leaped, for across the water came the cool, steady voice of Blythe.

"My man, I want to talk with Bothwell."

More feet pattered back and forth on the deck, and among the hurrying steps was one sharp and strong.

"Good evening, Captain Blythe. You're rather late for a call, aren't you? Mr. Sedgwick was in better time. We have to thank him for an hour's pleasant entertainment."

I recognized the voice as belonging to Bothwell.

"If you've hurt a hair of his head I'll hold you personally to account. Unless you want me to board your schooner you will at once release Mr. Sedgwick and Miss Wallace."

"Miss Wallace has practically ceased to exist," the Russian drawled.

"What do you mean?"

"I shall have the honor to send you cards, captain. Miss Wallace has become my wife."

I stuck my head out of the porthole and shouted. "That's a lie, Sam. You're just in time to save her."

"Are you a prisoner, Jack?"

"Yes. So is she. In the next cabin." Some one stepped quickly across the deck and leaned over the rail above me. Bothwell's dark face looked down into mine. He leveled a revolver at my head and fired just as I drew back.

That shot served as a signal for the attack. Bullets sang back and forth, some from the schooner, others from the boats of my friends.

As for the battle, I saw from my porthole only

the edge of it, and that but for a few moments as a boat full of men swept forward. Someone was firing with a rifle, while the others put their backs to the oars.

Presently the boat swept round the bow of the schooner and was lost to my view. But I could hear the firing of guns, the trampling of men above, and from their words could tell that the attackers were keeping their distance, even though they were firing pretty steadily from the cover of the shore bushes.

I must confess that Blythe's method of attack surprised me. How many men Bothwell had I did not know, but it was plain to me that the only way to take the ship was to rush it. We might fire at long distance for a week without doing more than keep them busy.

That I was wild to be free and in the thick of it may be guessed. Knowing as I did how matters stood between Evelyn and her cousin, I saw that she must be rescued at once to prevent the unholy marriage the Slav planned.

Strange that Sam could not see this and that he had not led a more dashing attempt at succoring the girl.

Three taps on the door of my prison jerked me round as if I had been pulled by a string. My re-

volver was in my hand. The door opened slowly and let in a man.

"That's far enough. What do you want?" I asked brusquely.

"S-sh! It's me, Mr. Sedgwick. Are you in irons?"

It was Gallagher. If I had been a Frenchman I would have kissed his ugly old mug for the sheer pleasure of seeing it. I knew now that Blythe had kept up the long distance fusillade in order to distract the attention of the defenders while Gallagher had crept close from the shore side.

I ran forward.

"Where is your boat?"

"Hidden in the bushes. Alderson is with it. Where is the lady, sir?"

In another minute Evelyn was free and standing with us in the passage. I noticed that the fire of the attackers had grown more rapid. The sound seemed closer. The demonstration was taking on the appearance of a real boarding expedition.

We climbed the forecastle ladder. I led the way, revolver in hand. From where I stood, a few steps from the top of the ladder, my eyes could sweep the forward deck.

Bothwell, the Flemings, and perhaps half a dozen dark-skinned sailors were crouching behind the

bulwarks, raising their heads above the rail only to shoot.

A constant crackling of small arms filled the air. The boats had crept nearer and were pouring a very steady fire upon the defenders.

The forward movement was only a diversion under cover of which we might have a chance to escape, but it was being executed with so much briskness and spirit that Bothwell could not guess its harmless nature.

At my signal the sailor led Evelyn quickly toward the poop. With my eyes over my left shoulder I followed at their heels. We had all but reached the stern when I heard the smack of a fist and turned in time to see a Panama peon hit the deck full length.

He had been hurrying forward and had caught sight of us. His mouth was open to shout an alarm at the time the Irishman's fist had landed against the double row of shining teeth.

The fellow rolled over and was up like an acrobat. But my revolver, pointing straight at his stomach, steadied him in an instant.

"Don't move or shout," I warned.

From the bushes Alderson had been waiting for us and his boat was in place. He flung up a rope

ladder with grappling hooks on the end. Gallagher fixed them to the rail and helped Evelyn down.

"You next," I ordered.

"Yes, sir."

"Your turn now, Sambo," I told the peon after the sailor had gone.

The fellow rolled his eyes wildly toward the stem of the vessel but found no hope from that quarter. He clambered over the rail like a monkey and went down hand after hand. I followed him.

We were huddled promiscuously in the little boat so that it rocked to the very lip. For a half a minute I was afraid we were going down, but a shift in position by Gallagher steadied the shell.

Meanwhile Alderson had thrown his muscles into the oars and we drew away steadily; fifty strokes, and the shadows had swallowed us.

Alderson pulled across the river and let the boat drift down the opposite bank. The outgoing tide carried us swiftly. We slipped past the schooner unobserved. Gallagher blew twice on a whistle and the two boats commanded by Blythe and Yeager at once drew back into safety.

Some three hundred yards farther down stream they caught up with us.

"All right, Jack?" Blythe called across to me.

"All right, Sam."

"Miss Wallace is with you, of course?"

"Yes, and one other passenger who nearly swamped us. Can you take our prisoner?"

His boat pulled up beside us and relieved us of one very frightened Panama peon. We were very glad to be rid of him, for a dozen times the waves had nearly swamped our overloaded skiff and I had been bailing every second.

A few minutes later we reached the *Argos*.

From Blythe I learned that Gallagher had been responsible for the plan by means of which he had rescued us. Moreover, he had insisted on taking the stellar rôle in carrying it out, dangerous as the part had been. It was his way of wiping out his share in the mutiny.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE LAST BRUSH

We resumed next morning the digging for the treasure. The shore party was made up of Blythe, Yeager, Smith, Higgins and Barbados.

Those of us left on board had a lazy time of it. I arranged watches of two to guard against any surprise on the part of the enemy either by an attack upon the yacht or by a sally along the shore upon the treasure diggers.

Having divided my men into watches, I discharged my mind of responsibility. Evelyn and I had a thousand things to tell each other. We sat on the upper deck under the tarpaulin and forgot everything except that we were lovers reunited after dreadful peril.

Youth is resilient. One would scarce have believed that this girl bubbling over with life and spirits was the same one who had been in such hopeless despair a few hours earlier.

A night's good sleep had set her up wonderfully. Last night I had looked into tired eyes that had

not yet fully escaped from the shadows of tragedy, into the sharp oval of a colorless face from which waves of storm had washed the life.

This morning the sun shone for her.

Courage had flowed back into her heart. Swift love ran now and again through her cheeks and tinted them.

She was herself, golden and delicate, elastic and vivid as a captured nymph.

"When I left the old *Argos* I thought I never wanted to see the yacht again, but now I think I could be happy here all my life," she confided.

"Wouldn't you prefer to have your cousin just a few miles farther away?"

She fell grave for a moment.

"Do you think he'll try to do more mischief?"

"He'll try. That's a safe bet. But I think we have him checkmated. By night we ought to have the bulk of the treasure on board. Once we get it the *Argos* will show him her heels."

Four bells sounded, six, eight. Dugan came down from the bridge to report to me.

"Captain Blythe's party coming down to the beach, sir."

Two of the men were carrying a large chest. It was so heavy that every forty or fifty yards relays relieved each other. The box was brought down

to the edge of the water and loaded into a boat. Smith and Higgins took their places at the oars and Blythe stepped into the bow.

The cargo seemed to call for tackle and ropes. I had them ready before the boat reached us. Blythe superintended the hoisting of the chest, arranging the ropes so as to make a slip impossible. We hauled it safely aboard.

"Have it taken to the strong room, Sam. There's another waiting for us ashore," Blythe explained.

"Want me to go back for it?"

"No. Keep a sharp lookout for our friend up the river."

He was pulled ashore again and returned two hours later with a second chest, this time leaving Yeager and Barbados on guard at the cache. Gallagher and Alderson were sent ashore later to join Tom's party for the night watch.

A few more hours' work would be enough to lift the rest of the treasure. Already we had on board a fortune in doubloons and bars of gold, but there was still one more chest to be unearthed. We felt that we were near the end of our adventure and our spirits were high.

Blythe got out his violin and Evie sang some of her plantation songs, her soft voice falling easily into the indolent negro dialect.

My stunt was Irish stories. We dragooned the staid Morgan into playing the piano while we ragged.

It must have been close to midnight before we spoke of breaking up.

Evelyn and I took a turn on the deck. Our excuse was to get a breath of fresh air, but the truth is that we were always drifting together.

Even in the company of others our eyes had a way of sending wireless messages of which we two only understood the code.

We leaned against the rail and looked across the bay. It was a night of ragged clouds behind which the moon was screened.

"Isn't that a boat over there?" Evie asked, pointing in the direction of the river mouth.

The moon had peeped out and was flinging a slant of light over the water. I looked for a long minute.

"Yes. I believe it's Bothwell's schooner. He has slipped out unnoticed. The fellow must mean mischief."

"Oh, I hope not," said Evie, and she gave a little shiver.

A sound came faintly over the water to us from the shore.

"Did you hear that?" Evelyn turned to me, her face white in the shining moonbeam.

A second pistol shot followed the first.

"Trouble at the cache!"

I turned toward the pavilion and met Blythe. Already he was flinging a crisp order to the watch.

"Lower a boat, Neidlinger. Smith will help you. That you, Higgins? Rouse all hands from sleep. We've work afoot."

Again came a faint echo across the still waters, followed by two sharper explosions. Some one had brought a rifle into action.

Blythe turned to me. "It's my place to stand by the ship, Jack. This may be a ruse to draw us off. I can spare you one man to go ashore and see what the trouble is. Take your pick."

I chose Smith.

"Keep a sharp lookout, Jack. He's wily as the devil, Bothwell is. Better not land at the usual place. He may have an ambush planted."

"All right, Sam."

The Englishman turned to give Stubbs orders for arming the crew.

In the darkness a groping little hand found mine.

"Must you go, Jack? I—wish you would stay here."

My arm slid around the shoulders of my girl.

"It's up to me to go, honey."

We were alone under the awning. Her soft arms went round my neck and her fingers laced themselves.

"You'll be careful, won't you? It's all so horrible. I thought it was all over, and now—— Oh, boy, I'm afraid!"

"Don't worry. Blythe will hold the ship."

"Of course. It isn't that. It's *you*. I don't want you to go. Let Mr. Stubbs."

I shook my head.

"No, dear. That won't do. It's my place to go. But you needn't worry. The gods take care of lovers. I'll come back all right."

Her interlaced fingers tightened behind my neck.

"Don't be reckless, then. You're so foolhardy. I couldn't bear it if—if anything happened to you."

"Nothing will happen except that I shall come back to brag of our victory," I smiled.

"If I could be sure!" she cried softly.

The sinister sound of shots had drifted to us as we talked. The boat was by this time lowered and I knew I must be gone. Gently I unclasped the knotted fingers.

"Must you go *already?*" She made no other protest, but slipped a plain band ring from her

finger to my hand. "I want you to have something of mine with you, so that——"

Her voice broke, but I knew she meant so that the gods of war might know she claimed ownership and send me back safe. For another instant she lay on my heart, then offered me her lips and surrendered me to my duty.

"Ready, Jack!" called Blythe cheerfully.

I ran across the deck and joined the man in the skiff. We pushed off and bent to the stroke. As our oars gripped the water the sound of another far, faint explosion drifted to us.

We landed a couple of hundred yards to the right of the spit and dragged our little boat into some bushes close to the shore.

I gave Smith instructions to stay where he was unless he heard the hooting of an owl. If the call came once he was to advance very quietly; if twice, as fast as he could cover the ground.

The mosquitoes were a veritable plague. As I moved forward they swarmed around me in a cloud. Unfortunately I had not taken the time to bring the face netting with which we all equipped ourselves when going ashore.

Before I had covered fifty yards I heard voices raised as in anger. Presently I made out the sharp,

imperious tones of Bothwell and the dogged persistent ones of Henry Fleming.

"I'll do as I please. Understand that, my man!" The words were snapped out with a steel edge to them.

"No, by thunder, you won't! I don't care about the cattleman, but Gallagher and Alderson were my shipmates. I'm no murderous pirate."

"You'll hang for one, you fool, if you're not careful. Didn't Gallagher desert to the enemy? Wasn't Alderson against us from start to finish? Didn't one of them give me this hole in my arm just now? They'll either join us or go to the sharks," Bothwell announced curtly.

From where I stood, perhaps forty yards north of the cache, I could make out that my friends were prisoners. No doubt the pirate had taken them at advantage and forced a surrender. Of Barbados I could see no sign. Later I learned that he had taken to his heels at the first shot.

Twice I gave the hoot of an owl. Falling clearly on the still night, the effect of my signal was startling.

"What was that, boss?" asked a Panamanian faintly.

"An owl, you fool," retorted Bothwell impatiently. "Come, I give you one more chance, Gal-

lagher. Will you join us and share the booty? Or shall I blow out your brains?"

Gallagher, from where he lay on the ground, spoke out firmly:

"I'll sail no more with murderous mutineers."

"Bully for you, partner!" boomed the undaunted voice of the cattleman.

"And you, Alderson?"

"I stand with my friends, Captain Bothwell."

"The more fool you, for you'll be a long time dead. Stand back, Fleming."

As I ran forward I let out a shout.

Simultaneously a revolver cracked.

Bothwell cursed furiously, for Henry Fleming had struck up the arm of the murderer.

The Russian turned furiously on the engineer and fired point-blank at him.

The bullet must have struck him somewhere, for the man gave a cry.

Bothwell whirled upon me and fired twice as I raced across the moonlit sand.

A flash of lightning seared my shoulder but did not stop me.

"Ha! The meddler again! Stung you that time, my friend," he shouted, and fired at me a third time.

They were the last words he was ever to utter.

One moment his dark, venomous face craned toward me above the smoke of his revolver, the next it was slowly sinking to the ground in a contorted spasm of pain and rage.

For George Fleming had avenged the attempt upon his brother's life with a shot in the back.

Bothwell was dead almost before he reached the ground.

For a moment we all stood in a dead silence, adjusting our minds to the changed conditions.

Then one of the natives gave a squeal of terror and turned to run. Quick as a flash the rest of them—I counted nine and may have missed one or two—were scuttling off at his heels.

George Fleming stared at the body of his chief which lay so still on the ground with the shining moon pouring its cold light on the white face.

Then slowly his eyes came up to meet mine.

In another moment he and his brother were crashing through the lush underbrush to the beach. I judged from the rapidity with which Henry moved that he could not be much hurt. From the opposite direction Smith came running up.

I dropped to my knees beside Yeager and cut the thongs that tied his hands.

"Hurt?" I asked.

"No," he answered in deep disgust at himself.

"I stumbled over a root and hit my head against this tree right after the game opened. Gallagher and Alderson had to play it out alone. But Bothwell must have had fourteen men with him. He got Gallagher in the leg and rushed Alderson. You dropped in right handy, Jack."

"And not a minute too soon. By Jove! we ran it pretty fine this trip. Badly hurt, Gallagher?"

"No, sir. Hit in the thigh."

I examined the wound as well as I could and found it not as bad as it might have been.

"A good clean flesh wound. You're in luck, Gallagher. The last two days have more than wiped out your week of mutiny. We're all deep in your debt."

"Thank you, sir," he said, flushing with pleasure.

Here I may put it down that this was the last word Gallagher heard about his lapse from duty. He and the other reconstructed mutineers were forgiven, their fault wiped completely off the slate.

I sent Alderson down to the spit to signal the *Argos* for a boat. One presently arrived with Stubbs and Higgins at the oars. The little cockney was struck with awe at sight of the dead man.

"My heye, Mr. Sedgwick, 'e's got 'is at larst and none too soon. 'Ow did you do it?"

"I didn't do it. One of his friends did."

"Well, 'e 'ad it comin' to 'im, sir. But I'll sye for him that 'e was a man as well as a devil."

We helped Gallagher down to the boat and he and I were taken aboard.

The wound in my shoulder was but a scratch.

It was enough, however, to let me in for a share of the honors with Gallagher.

In truth I had done nothing but precipitate by my arrival the final tragedy; but love, they say, is blind.

It was impossible for me to persuade Evelyn that I had not been the hero of the occasion.

She could appreciate the courage of the three men who had chosen death rather than to join Bothwell in his nefarious plans, but she was caught by the melodramatic entry I had made upon the stage.

"You were one against fourteen, but that didn't stop you at all. Of course the others were brave, but——"

"Sheer nonsense, my dear. Any one can shout 'Villain, avaunt!' and prance across the sand, but there wasn't any pleasant excitement about looking Boris Bothwell in the eye and telling him to shoot and be hanged. That took sheer, cold, unadulterated nerve, and my hat's off to the three of them."

She leaned toward me out of the shadow, and the light in her eyes was wonderful.

With all the innocence of a Grecian nymph they held, too, the haunting, wistful pathos of eternal motherhood.

She yearned over me, almost as if I had been the son of her dreams.

"Boy, Jack, I'm glad it's over—so glad—so glad. I love you—and I've been afraid for you."

Desire of her, of the sweet brave spirit in its beautiful sheath of young flesh, surged up in my blood irresistibly.

I caught her to my heart and kissed the soft corn-silk hair, the deep melting eyes, the ripe red lips.

By Heaven, I had fought for her and had won her! She was the gift of love, won in stark battle from the best fighter I had ever met.

The mad Irish blood in me sang.

After all I am not the son of a filibuster for nothing.

CHAPTER XXVII

IN HARBOR

The morning found me as good as new except for a dull ache in my shoulder. I was up betimes for breakfast and ready for shore duty.

Yet I was glad to accept Blythe's orders to stay on board as long as we remained in Darien Harbor.

It was good to avoid the sun and the mosquitoes and the moist heat of the jungle, though I felt a little guilty at lying in a hammock on the shady side of the deck with Evelyn at my side, while my friends were perspiring in the burning sand pits with shovel and pick.

Fortunately, it was only a few hours before the last of the boxes buried by Bucks was uncovered. Jamaica Ginger's hatchet found it a good fifty yards from the others. Within an hour it had been dragged out of the dirt and brought aboard.

We sailed the same afternoon about twelve hours later than the schooner, which had quietly slipped

past us on its way to the sea in the faint light of early dawn.

That Fleming had given up the attempt to win the treasure was plain. I doubt whether his men would have followed him even if he had wished it, for he had not the dominant temper of his chief.

We dropped anchor under the lee of a little island in the Boco Chico, but our engines were throbbing again by break of day. As we puffed across the North Bay we passed the schooner almost within a stone's throw.

Henry Fleming was on deck, and half a dozen of the blacks and browns who made up the crew swarmed to the side of the vessel to see us. Blythe had made quiet preparations in case any attempt at stopping us should be made, but apparently nothing was farther from the thoughts of the enemy.

In fact several of the dusky deck hands waved us a friendly greeting as we drove swiftly past. From that day to this I have never seen any member of that crew, though a letter received last week from Gallagher—who is doing well in the cattle business in the Argentine—mentioned that he had run across Henry Fleming at Buenos Ayres.

Out of the Gulf of San Miguel we pushed past Brava Point as fast as Stubbs could send the *Argos*. The lights of Panama called to us. They

stood for law and civilization and the blessed dominance of the old stars and stripes.

We were in a hurry to get back to the broad piazzas of its hotels, where women at their ease did fancy work and played bridge while laughing children romped without fear.

Adventure is all very well, but I have discovered that one can get a surfeit of it.

Before the division of the treasure there arose a point of morality that, oddly enough, had not been considered before. It was born of my legal conscience and for a few minutes was disturbing.

Tom and I were in Blythe's cabin with him discussing an equitable division of the spoils. Into my mind popped the consideration that we were not the owners of it all but certain remote parties in Peru.

After having fought for it and won it the treasure was not ours. The thing hit me like a blow in the face. I spoke my thought aloud. Sam looked blankly at me.

Yeager laughed grimly. There was a good deal of the primitive man still in the Arizonian.

"If they want it let them come and take it. I reckon finding is keeping."

But I knew the matter could not be settled so easily as that. A moral question had arisen and

it had to be faced. Evelyn was called into counsel.

She had an instant solution of the difficulty.

"We can't return it even if we want to. The town of Cerro Blanco and the neighboring mines were destroyed by an earthquake in 1819. Not a soul at the mines escaped and only a few peasants from the town. You will find the whole story in Vanbrough's 'Great Earthquakes.'"

"Then, after all, we are the rightful owners."

"I'm afraid we are," she smiled.

Blythe, already as wealthy as he cared to be, declined to accept any share of our spoils beyond the expenses of the cruise. Each of the sailors received a good-sized lump sum, as did also Philips and Morgan.

Rather against the wishes of our captain the three former mutineers shared with the rest of the crew. We did not of course forget the relatives of the men who had fallen in our defense.

The boatswain Caine left a widow and two children. We put her upon a pension until she married a grocer two years later.

We were never able to hear that she thought the loss of husband number one anything but a good riddance.

Jimmie's share went into a fund, which is being managed by Yeager and me as trustees. It is

enough to keep him and his mother while the boy is being educated and to leave a small nest-egg in addition.

Yeager, of course, put his profits into cattle. Since Evelyn and I moved to Los Angeles we see a good deal of Tom and his wife. At least once during the winter we run across to his Arizona ranch for a week or two. His boy is just old enough to give his name proudly with a lisp as "Tham Blythe Yeager."

Ours is a girl. She has the golden hair and the sparkling spirit of her mother.

N. B.—The autocrat of the household has just read the last line as she leans over my shoulder. She will give me no peace till I add that the baby has the blue, Irish eyes of her dad.

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